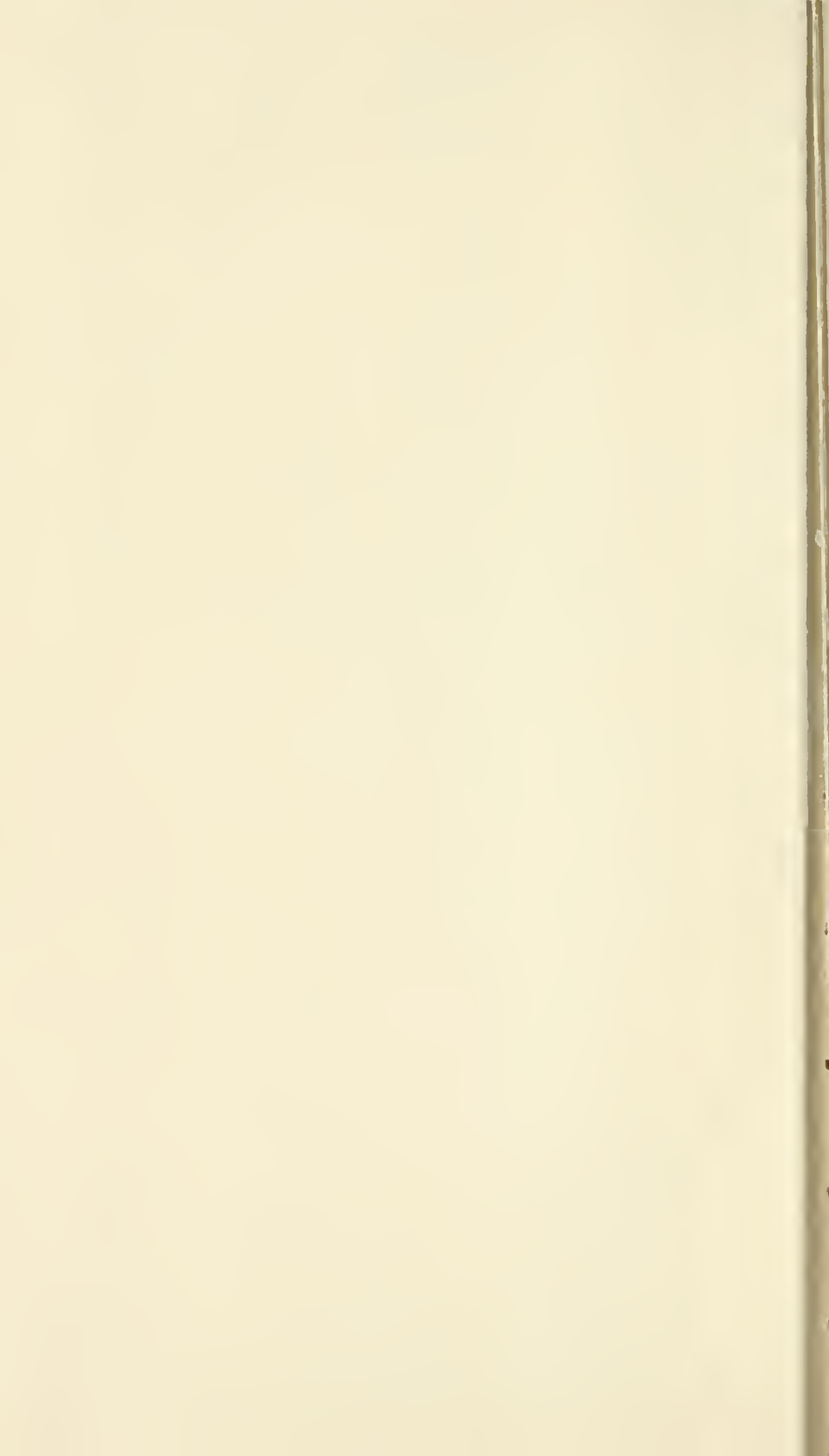


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ALEXENA;

OR, THE

Castle of Santa Marco.

A ROMANCE,

IN THREE VOLUMES.





Engraved by Brocas junr

ALEXENA;

OR, THE

Castle of Santa Marco,

A ROMANCE,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

EMBELLISHED WITH ENGRAVINGS.

“Ye gods of quiet and of sleep profound!
Whose soft dominion o'er this castle sways;
And all the widely silent places round.
Forgive me, if my trembling pen displays
What never yet was sung in mortal lays.”

VOL. II.

London:

Printed at the Minerva Press, for

A. K. NEWMAN AND CO. LEADENHALL-ST.

1817.

1871

Wm. W. Phelps

...

ALEXENA;

OR THE

Castle of Santa Marco.



CHAPTER I.

“ ’Tis now the very witching time of night,
When church-yards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world.”

HAMLET.

AS soon as the “iron tongue of midnight had tolled twelve,” the moon retired, leaving Lord Mortimer and his attendants in almost impenetrable darkness; Monfranc then led the way, and they proceeded towards the castle’s base, with speed, anxiety, and caution.

The path they followed was unincumbered by obstacles of any sort ; so they reached it in safety, and waited with impatience the return of the lamp of night, which shortly after burst through a mass of sable clouds, and tipped with rays of silver, the tops of the surrounding cliffs ; her light then served to show the utter impossibility of scaling the rock, and his lordship examined it with minute attention ; he went round every projection, peeped into every crevice accessible to him, and turned from it in despair ; while the sound of the heavy foot-falls of the guards on the rampart above, insured certain destruction, in the event of the slightest noise. They therefore were extremely cautious, keeping in the shade as much as possible, until Monfranc, in a low whisper, required their return, expressing great anxiety at the delay that had been already made, and hinted there was a strong probability they would be surprised, if they continued longer in such a perilous situation. Had Lord Morti-

mer at that moment observed the expression of his guide's features, he would have seen much to excite his suspicion; the countenance of Monfranc was marked with the deepest anxiety, accompanied by the exulting looks of successful cunning; but his lordship was otherwise engaged; his every thought was Alexena's, and he was then equally inattentive to every other object under heaven; not so Albert, he had the penetration to see the change that so forcibly marked the manner of their guide, and determined to shoot him on the spot, should any incident occur, which would justify his fears, and prove Monfranc a traitor.

A condense cloud at that instant again obscured the moon, which was considered a favourable moment to retire from their dangerous situation; they therefore followed Monfranc through the narrow defile, into an angle in the glen, (the most lonely and gloomy spot which lay between the cottage and the castle;) the road on every side was overshadowed with clustering shrubs,

whose foliage cast a deep shade across the narrow path, and Albert, in vain, endeavoured to catch a glimpse of his guide's countenance, but the darkness frustrated his design, and in eager endeavours to effect his purpose, he stumbled, and fell; his lordship stooped to raise him, when, to his incredible dismay, Monfrane plunged into the shade, whistling so shrill, that the distant rocks wrung with the echo, and before our hero and his servants could prepare their arms, they, to their infinite terror, observed upwards of twenty carbines levelled at them from every direction; to move, was to incur inevitable destruction, as they were completely surrounded by banditti. The only alternative was submission; but Lord Mortimer hoped to make conditions before he gave up his arms, and desired their chief to come forward, to whom he would surrender. A robber then advanced, who, from the dark plume that waved in his cap, and the purple cloak which enveloped his figure, appeared to be their captain. He commanded

the gang to surround their prisoners, but promised they should not sustain either injury or insult, and desired the troop to treat them with civility. "However," he continued, "should they attempt to escape, recollect your orders." The bandits bowed slightly, and having disarmed their captives, began their march through the most desolate wilds imaginable.

They travelled the whole night, and as soon as the first tints of morning enabled them to distinguish objects, Lord Mortimer found himself in a most horrible romantic glen, between two black barren mountains, which seemed to lead to a forest, and on approaching, the idea was confirmed by those of the banditti who were mounted alighting, immediately after they entered a thicket, raising the branches as they proceeded, forming an arch, under which their comrades passed; and when the whole group were assembled, the umbrageous shade resumed its wonted position, effectually securing the entrance to this leafy prison.

CHAP. II.

“———— For the love of all the gods,
Let's leave the hermit pity with our mothers ;
And when we have our armour buckl'd on,
The venom'd vengeance ride upon our swords !”

TROIL. & CRES.

THE banditti moved forward in a zig-zag direction, until they reached a small cavity in a rock, of jetty blackness, into which they crept, accompanied by his lordship; but having once entered, the cavern became more spacious, though the extreme darkness precluded the possibility of ascertaining its extent. In a few moments, one of the robbers made the vaulty cave ring with a signal whistle, and instantly faint flashes of light gleamed in the misty obscurity, accompanied by the murmur of voices, and the distant sound of footsteps. Lord Mortimer was now hurried forward by his conductors, but shrunk back in terror, on observing

their grim shadows reflected in a dark pool, whose waters made a mournful sound, as they gently washed the crevices of their stony boundaries; which one of the ruffians perceiving, flung a rocky fragment into its glossy bosom, causing a noise like distant thunder—adding horror to the scene. The bright glare of torches soon displayed the situation of the cavern, and countenances more terrible than Satan's representatives; who, as they approached a massive iron grating that impeded further progress, welcomed their comrades with curses; swearing, their chief expected them two hours before. His lordship on hearing this, found he had not as yet seen the captain of these predacious bravos, and his imagination instantly presented the form of Belzo Carracci; but the ruffians gave him little time for reflection, having ordered him to ascend a short flight of steps, which led to the iron grate, that the banditti within were moving by the assistance of a windlass, and as it slowly rose into the rocks

above, made a most disagreeable grating noise.

While a passage was thus preparing, the robbers rudely jested with each other. "Hark you, Bondello," said one of the villains within the grating, "I wish this damned portcullis was after coming smash on your toes, as we should then see the prettiest face in Christendom, eh! what think you? would you look as blue as the night you saw the black knight in the gallery of Santa Marco." To this the other answered, with a muttered threat, and a deep growl:—"I, I, Signior; you would hop, but not run quite so fast as you did previous to your tumbling down the great stair-case." Bondello's eyes glared fury; but on laying his hand on the hilt of his sabre, he who was second in command ordered the mischievous wag to be silent, and in a rage demanded, "were they to be admitted before the day of judgment?" The bandit now became less talkative, and in a few moments the grate was suffi-

ently raised to admit Lord Mortimer with his guards, who proceeded forward, while the portcullis fell with a hideous crash, into a deep groove cut in the rock for its reception, and its bolts were immediately replaced in their respective fastenings. The ruffians for some time advanced in a straight line, until they reached the top of a flight of stairs, cut in the solid rock; they then descended, and passed through a vast number of winding passages, which led to a kind of octagon hall, from which others branched off in various directions. Here they paused for a few minutes, as if waiting for orders. Again the cavern rung with the signal whistle, and again they proceeded, following the direction to the right, which brought them to a second hall, larger than the first. This terminated in a flight of steps, leading to a stone gallery, surrounded on every side by small chambers, which his lordship conceived to be the apartments of the banditti; and at the end of this they entered a

large square vault, still guarded by ten of the most ferocious of the troop. Here his lordship was informed his eyes, and those of his attendants, must be covered, and on his remonstrating, was again assured no violence was intended, but his unwillingness encreased, which Bondello observing, exclaimed, "Come, come, Signior, no folly; were we ordered to send you to hell, we should blow your brains about your ears, without all this ceremony." His lordship felt the truth of this savage remonstrance, and being convinced further resistance would only serve to irritate those wretches, quietly submitted to have the bandage placed on his eyes; Rourke and Albert were also hoodwinked, and the operation seemed to afford great mirth to the ruffians, particularly as Tom's face was nigh as rueful as that of Don Quixote. The poor fellow believing the following moment should be his last, made an attempt to pull the handkerchief from his brows, as he vociferated "damn it, if I

am to die, let it be like a man, with my eyes open." Down fell the bandage, and judge Rourke's surprise, on finding the floor had sunk several feet, leaving the robbers above gazing at them as they descended; he was too much astonished to be able to articulate, and on looking down, observed several of the banditti below, waiting to receive them; the moment after, the platform rested securely on the floor of a comfortable apartment, where there was an excellent fire, and a plentiful repast; the floor was carpeted, and the furniture of excellent workmanship. Tom instantly whispered the satisfaction he felt at this unlooked-for change, and began to be somewhat reconciled to his situation, when the robbers poured into the chamber, from various apertures in the wall, each placing his hand on the back of the chair which he intended to occupy, and invited Rourke and Albert to sit with them. Lord Mortimer was conducted to the upper end of the room, where he observed the anxious

looks of the troop, which seemed to say, they either expected the entrance of their chief, or permission to partake of the inviting repast before them. In a few moments a bugle sounded, and the instant after, Monfranc entered, habited as a bandit, to conduct Lord Mortimer into the presence of his chief. His lordship beheld him with surprise and indignation, at which the latter smiled, and taking his hand, said, "My lord, I told you a powerful friend promised protection to your Alexena, I now come to lead you to him, and in Belzo Carracci you shall behold a man, who, I trust, will prove worthy your confidence." His lordship, still more surprised, suffered himself to be conducted into an adjoining chamber, which was most splendidly decorated, and where he found Carracci. Monfranc introduced him, and he was received by the chief, with all the ease and grace of the finished gentleman. Lord Mortimer beheld the martial form of this extraordinary free-booter, with evident admiration;

his intelligent countenance indicated a promptitude in action, and a fund of inexhaustible resources; his arched brows gave the strongest expression to his every action, and his face, though extremely handsome, bore the marks of the rude elements to which it had long been accustomed. When agitated by any great exertion, his whole form seemed dilated and marked with an air of inexpressible ardour; his height added grace to his athletic figure, which seemed to have been cast in the mould of symmetry itself, and though a robber, with perverted principles, yet had a more gentle heart than many of those held up to the admiring world as patterns of virtue and morality.

His lordship, in a short time, forgot his imperfections, and in the graces of his conversation, found amusement, if not information, and before breakfast was removed, felt charmed that he had found so powerful an assistant in such an extraordinary man as Carracci. About noon, the banditti were ordered

to assemble in the great hall of this subterranean world, to attend their chief, on business of particular importance; and when the bugle announced they waited, he led his lordship into the midst of that horrible assembly, where he was certain his wishes would be complied with, and the moment he entered, the banditti evinced their respect by a loud cheer of welcome, and by uncovering their heads. Carracci waved his sabre, and in an instant all was silent as the tomb; then taking his lordship's hand, he said, "Behold the friend of the man whom you have voluntarily named your chief, and as such receive him; swear that his cause shall be your own, and that to the utmost of your power, you will avenge him—swear to exterminate the vile Acasto and his infamous agent, the implacable foes of Carracci and his band. The day that gives him to destruction, insures ye the treasures of the castle, and for this I pledge my faith. The hall now resounded with wild huzzas, and in a moment out flew, "their flaming faul-

chions.”—“ We swear,” they shouted, “ We swear, to send his soul to hell at the first signal.” A thrill of horror shot through the form of Lord Mortimer, as he raised his eye to that of Carracci, and started on beholding the terrors of his visage; his gentleness had fled, and was succeeded by the most envenomed vengeance; his lordship then recollecting his late words, mentally exclaimed, “ May not Acasto have been his bitterest foe, may he not have driven him by his wiles, to his present dreadful situation? It must be so, and what punishment is too great for a wretch that has, perhaps, wantonly destroyed one of Nature’s fairest works. Oh! Carracci, I feel convinced you have not always been a villain, and from my soul I pity the despair which drew you into this whirlpool of vice; is there yet a possibility of reclaiming you? I know not, but the attempt is worth the trial; and if fated to remain your captive any length of time, every exertion of mine shall be expended in the endeavour, and may

the powers of mercy grant me success." He was now called on to return thanks for promised assistance, which he did with such a winning grace, as created in the minds of the robbers, a particular desire to render him service.

When they retired from the hall, Carracci recommended a few hours repose, after which, he promised to communicate the plan he had formed in his behalf, but until then, determined to be silent. Monfrane was now ordered to conduct him to the crimson chamber. "See," said Carracci, "that it is well aired, and let no noise disturb that quarter. Farewell, my lord," he continued, "may you enjoy that repose, which never can revisit the unfortunate man you have honoured with your confidence." Lord Mortimer beheld him with compassion, and with difficulty concealed his emotion, as he replied, "trust in Providence, mercy always waits with extended arms to receive a repentant sinner." "Hush! hush!" Belzo softly exclaimed, "such precepts

insure destruction here; but you are fatigued—good night—good night.” He then hurried away through a distant door, and his lordship followed Monfrane in melancholy silence, attended by his domestics.

As they proceeded, they were astonished by the various winding passages, which seemed cut in the solid rock, and were secured at the different turnings by iron gates, whose massive strength, and solid fastenings, seemed to defy the power of every intruder. After wandering some time in those chill vaults, they entered a chamber containing several gigantic figures of warriors, in various attitudes; while his lordship paused to examine their grim countenances, Monfrane picked up a long forked instrument from the floor, and with its points, pressed against the eye-balls of one of those statues; instantly the wall behind them rent asunder, forming a breach a few feet from the ground, and disclosed to

his astonished lordship, the chamber to which Carracci had ordered him to be conducted. A small ladder was placed against the aperture, which he ascended, and entered a spacious apartment, aired by a cheerful fire, that diffused light and warmth. The room was hung with crimson velvet, trimmed with gold, and the hangings of the bed corresponded with the rest of the drapery; the style of the entire was magnificent, and increased his lordship's wonder. Monfrane now entered into conversation, and in a few words informed him, he was first lieutenant of the troop, and had been sent by Carracci to Bayonne, for the purpose of conducting him to the Castle of Santa Marco, being himself in a cottage at the foot of the Pyrennees, where, from some of his band, he had intimation of Don Philip's outrage, the night it had been committed. He was about further explaining the conduct and intentions of his captain, when one of those whistles

summoned him away, and he hurried from the chamber, attended by his lordship's servants, notwithstanding their earnest entreaties to the contrary, as they wished to sit by the fire, and watch while he slept; but to dispute was vain—the orifice closed—the ladder was removed—and Albert, with Rourke, securely locked within an adjoining chamber, and then Monfrane flew off to obey the well known signal.

We will now return to Alexena, who had no conception of the vicinity of her lover on her arrival at the castle, nor of any circumstance relative to him, since their unfortunate separation at Duval's hotel, or the reasons which induced Don Philip to visit Santa Marco, a place, even the name of which, he could not hear with composure, and disliked more than any other spot on earth.

CHAP. III.

“————— There’s more gold:—
Do you damn others, and let this damn you,
And ditches grave you all!”

TIMON.

IMMEDIATELY after the escape of Lord Mortimer, Montano robbed the Dominican convent and monastery, which he easily effected, being treasurer, and then, with his ill-gotten wealth, made all possible haste to the nearest sea-port, where he engaged a vessel, and sailed for France. Being addicted to gaming from his earliest infancy, and now having the power of gratifying this darling passion, he soon became a constant attendant at the tables of Bayonne, where his acquaintance with Don Philip was renewed. Montano had been the early instructor of his youth; but the austerity of his manner disgusted the parents of Acasto, who dismissed him; and he did not again meet his pupil, until this eventful period. They, however, soon

recognized each other, and shortly after found their sentiments congenial. Don Philip, notwithstanding, won almost every pistole from the monk, who became almost frantic with repeated losses, and tortured himself with devices, how he should regain his lost property. Being well acquainted with the passions of Acasto, he was forming many diabolical projects, when all his ideas were suddenly turned into a new channel, by discovering Alexena. On the wings of a dæmon, he flew to Acasto with this intelligence, and inflamed his imagination with a glowing description of her charms, and when he found him ripe for his purpose, she was represented as an easy victim; and as Montano had foreseen, Don Philip only beheld her to be enamoured; thus his villainy was, for the present, crowned with success; Acasto returned every ducat of his money, and added some thousands more to bribe those who were likely to prove successful agents. In a short

time a brigantine was prepared, and some of the vile domestics of the castle were ordered to attend on the coast of Fontarabia, with horses. Money purchased the wavering honesty of Duval and his servants, but the capture of Alexena, made ample compensation for the trouble and expended treasure.

It is useless to enter into a detail of her journey to Santa Marco; let it suffice, that Don Philip was particularly attentive, and Montano as brutal as he dare be; she suffered the civilities of the one, and the cruelty of the other, with the same apathy; and had it not been for her firm reliance on the goodness of that Providence which had always supported her, under the heaviest afflictions, she must have fallen a victim to despondency and grief.

While her conductors led her through the wild passes of the Pyrennees, she doubted the possibility of Lord Mortimer's ever being able to trace the footsteps of Acasto; and the farther she proceeded, the more those fears were

likely to be realized. But what tongue can tell, or pen describe, her agony, when she beheld the terrible fortress in which Don Philip informed her she should remain, until he had the felicity of calling her his for ever. They were then before the gates, the draw-bridge was about to be lowered, when Alexena gave a wild, desponding glance around.

“Oh! merciful God,” she exclaimed, in the greatest misery, “what shall I do? Oh! will you not save me from those fiends?—is there no friend nigh?—alas! no, no—all is gloomy barrenness, and I am, indeed, lost.”

Montano's eyes flashed fire—he caught the reins of her horse's bridle, and, with a curse, flogged the poor animal into the grassy court of the castle. Her spirits now forsook her; objects became indistinct; and she fell fainting into the arms of Acasto's steward, Torquo, whose savage appearance was more than sufficient to cause a relapse. When respiration restored her exhausted faculties, she

found herself in a large gloomy chamber, supported by black marble pillars, lit by a large gothic window, whose painted glass emitted a dim light, that rendered objects confused, and led her to believe the pale emaciated form of old Margaret, who sat by her, administering restoratives, was some spectre; conjured up by an over-heated imagination. "My poor dear lovely child," said this good creature, "I trust you are now better, and though you have the misfortune to fall into the hands of Don Philip, I think he will not be permitted by Providence to injure so much goodness; there is Larco, who has made all the servants cry, by relating your sorrows, and the patience with which you suffered the cruelties of that savage monk." Here she was interrupted by a loud, yet hoarse voice, vociferating, "Margaret! hollo! old hulk, I say, where have cast anchor?"

"Merciful Heaven," exclaimed the agitated Alexena, "who is this?"

“Who is this?” echoed the hollow wall.

“’Tis I, Bill Williams—eh! what cheer? how fares our little sciff?—What! wrecked by a broadside of sorrow—foundered in an inhospitable port!”

“Silence, for heaven’s sake!” said Margaret, “dear William, Donna Alexena is very ill, but not so much as your kind fears lead you to believe.”

“Well, well, there’s hope abaft—What cheer, young lady, what cheer? Damn me if e’er Bill heaves a billow against a vessel, already half shattered in the gale of misfortunes.”

“My friend, I thank you,” said Alexena, with bewitching softness, “but I wish to be left to the solitude of my chamber the remainder of this evening, as I am really very unwell.”

“God steer you into the harbour of safety,” rejoined Williams, as he wiped away a starting tear. “But come, old Weathergale,” addressing Margaret, “you are wanting to heave dinner on

deck as fast as possible. May the first bit our chaplain stows, stick in his hatchway, and run him into a snug mooring in hell."

Margaret, to prevent Alexena being alarmed by the sea vocabulary of honest Bill, as he called himself, hurried him from the room, still muttering curses on Don Philip and Montano.

"D—I founder them and their yellow rhino," he vociferated, as they descended the stairs; "Do you think it will purchase a passport to Heaven?—I'll none of it."

"For mercy's sake, I beg you will lower your voice, or you may be overheard," observed Margaret.

"D—n me! who's afraid?" cried Williams. "I wul save this dear little bark, or perish."

When their voices were no longer distinguishable, Alexena slid from the bed; and while the pearly tears fell fast on her bosom, she besought her Divine Father to grant her fortitude to bear her trials with Christian resignation, and

rose from her knees considerably relieved ; the pure spirit of religion armed her mind with fortitude, and promised to preserve her from every impending danger. Shortly after, Margaret re-appeared with a tray of refreshments, and with the pleasing information, that she had obtained Don Philip's permission to remain *that night* in her chamber.



CHAP. IV.

“ A devil, a born devil, on whose nature
Nurture can never stick ;
* * * * *
* * * * *
And as with age his body uglier grows,
So his mind cankers.”

TEMPEST.

THE moment Margaret awoke, she gently stole to our heroine's bed, who had fallen a few minutes before into a deep sleep, having watched during the night, and did not seek repose until day dispelled her fears, but was then enjoying a temporary relief from her many sorrows. Her kind attendant, who was

obliged to look after the affairs of the household, with light steps crossed the chamber; the door of which she softly closed after her, at the same time breathing a fervent aspiration for our heroine's safety; and on entering the gallery, to her surprise and satisfaction, met Donna Louisa on her way to Alexena's apartment.

"Dear Donna," said Margaret, while she almost shrieked with joy, "when did Don Philip release you?"

"Very lately, my kind friend, and I understand am indebted for the indulgence, to a fair captive, in whose chamber you have passed the night."

"I, Heaven bless her, fair, good, gentle, lovely—every thing amiable.—oh! you will be so pleased with her, Donna—but she yet sleeps, and it were a pity to disturb her repose."

"Fear not, my good Margaret, I will go in and watch by her, and do you bring breakfast to her chamber, which we will partake of together."

"That I will, Donna, and serve every

dainty in the larder, with chocolate and coffee, of some of which, I trust, you will induce the poor dear child to partake, as food has not yet been tasted by her within these walls."

Margaret then hurried away, and Louisa glided into Alexena's room, where she watched and admired her as she slept. "Sweet, lovely girl," she softly murmured, "you are as yet unconscious of the terrors of this horrible castle, and of the crimes of its detestable owner; and may you never experience the bitter pangs that have rent my bosom within its walls. Oh! you angels of purity, guard, I beseech ye, this your representative, and save her from the fiends of lust! Oh! avert the storm, and let her not have cause to bewail the hour of her birth."

The last words of Louisa were not lost on her who had caused them, and the tears which rolled down her pale cheeks, proved they had found the way to her heart.

"Dearest lady, I thank you," said

Alexena, "and if not an intrusion, may I entreat the name of her to whom my gratitude is so justly due."

Louisa answered not—her respiration was suspended—the paleness of death stole over her lovely countenance, and she sunk senseless on the bed. Our heroine was pitiably alarmed; she sprinkled water on her face; applied volatiles, and after considerable difficulty, fortunately succeeded in restoring animation. When somewhat recovered, in accents of the most touching woe, she said, "Oh! tell me, interesting stranger, are you a daughter of the house of Guzman?"

"Yes," said Alexena, "of Velasco de Guzman, late of Castile: I am his only, and unfortunate daughter.

"My cousin, my dear cousin!" exclaimed Louisa, clasping her to her bosom, "in me you behold the sister of Henri Count Bolerno, the dearest friend of your father."

This sudden and unexpected disclosure, almost reduced Alexena to the

state from which the moment before she had restored her friend ; and Margaret made her appearance with breakfast before they had regained any tolerable share of composure. Louisa, though greatly agitated, was not forgetful of her relative, who she induced, by the most winning entreaties, to partake of the morning's repast, and when it was removed, proposed a walk in the adjoining gallery. "The air blows fresh in it, my lovely cousin," she said, "and while we enjoy its coolness, I will give you a slight idea of this castle, and of its inmates ; but as you value your peace, conceal our relationship ; for had Don Philip the slightest intimation of that circumstance, we should instantly be separated, never again to behold each other."

Alexena promised to be advised by her in every respect, and they wandered into the gallery, from thence into several suites of apartments, which looked down on the ramparts, examining the furniture of each room as they passed.

Having entered one, the shutters of which were half closed, Louisa ventured to open them, that they might have a full view of the chamber, the half of which was veiled in obscurity; and whilst she was endeavouring to effect her purpose, her foot accidentally pressed a spring, and a door instantly flew open, a little to the right, discovering a narrow flight of stone steps, up which, the sound of voices were borne on the chill breeze that was generally felt in every direction of this dreadful mansion.

“ Let us retire,” said Alexena, timidly, “ lest those people we hear are Acasto and that vile monk; otherwise, in the event of being discovered, he may conceive us guilty of the meanness of listening.”

“ I approve of your advice,” replied her friend, “ but should this be Acasto, you, doubtless, are the subject of their conversation; and however criminal in other respects, it is a virtue to seek self preservation; and may it not be

highly probable, were we acquainted with the subject now in discussion, that it might enable us to avoid or defeat some plan, at present in agitation, for the destruction of your peace."

"Then! then!" exclaimed our terrified heroine, "you have heard of some dreadful design. Oh! let me hear the worst at once, and don't wreck the little fortitude I have yet remaining, with the tortures of suspense."

"Be not alarmed," said Louisa, "I have heard nothing to justify your fears, I only meant to guard you against those that our common enemy may be induced to attempt; therefore, let us descend, as we are not yet prohibited from wandering where fancy leads; and I assure you, it is probable our time will not be mispent."

She then drew the arm of Alexena within her's, who reluctantly suffered herself to be led down the stairs, into a stone gallery of amazing length; -at the further extremity of which, a door stood half open, and they timidly ap-

proached it. When about to enter, they distinctly heard voices in earnest conversation, and Alexena instantly turned to fly, but was detained by her more courageous companion, who ventured to peep into the chamber; then desired our heroine to approach, as it was equally devoid of inhabitants as of furniture. They were making observations on the probable use of this apartment, when they heard footsteps approaching, and Acasto conversing with Torquo, in no very gentle manner. Our adventurers listened for a moment, when Alexena heard her name repeated in a half whisper, and Louisa drew her nigher the postern door, that they might hear accurately.

“We have a right,” said she, in a suppressed voice, “to listen, since we are the subject of their *tete-a-tete*, and as this door is well secured, we need not fear intrusion.”

“Yes, but is it not detestable to pry into the secrets of any person,

particularly in this clandestine manner?"

"Certainly," replied Louisa, "I feel conscious it is almost inexcusable, but trust, if ever it were pardonable, it is so at this juncture, particularly when our situation is considered."

The persons outside were now quite close to the door, and spoke loud enough to be distinctly heard within.

"I say, my lord," said a voice, which Louisa recognized as that of Torquo, "it rains violently; had you not better enter the chamber of this tower? But now, I recollect, it is fastened on the inside, yet it affords a shelter in the thickness of its walls; pray stand in this niche, which offers protection from its violence."

"I will take your advice," said Don Philip, "and now that I am sheltered from this rude element, will you inform me the exact time you last saw Belzo Carracci, for I am told that horrible robber often frequents this neighbourhood."

“Most assuredly he does,” replied Torquo, “and very shortly since, plundered Don Cerasco, whom he treated with the utmost barbarity;—not content with the immense booty, he flogged him most unmercifully, for attempting to seduce the daughter of one of his own vassals, who, forsooth, the robber said he had promised to protect.”

“And did the bandits presume to inflict such disgraceful punishment?” demanded Acasto, in evident alarm.

“Aye, that they did, and with savage cruelty, for they literally flayed him alive; it is now two months since, and his medical attendants have not yet pronounced him out of danger.”

“Was the girl handsome?” inquired Don Philip, carelessly.

“I have heard she was, and accomplished, as Carracci paid for her education in a convent, where Don Cerasco’s mother saw her, and was so pleased with her, that she invited her to spend a few months at her mansion, during which time his lordship became intimate

—promised her marriage—substituted his servant for a priest,—accomplished his wishes—completely ruined—and then—deserted her for another beauty.

“We wander from the point,” replied Acasto, evidently disconcerted. “I wish to know when you last saw that infamous villain Belzo?”

“About a month ago, on my return from St. Sebastian, (where I had been to purchase necessaries preparatory to your return,) he galloped after, and being better mounted, easily came up with me. Ah! ah! Mr. Steward, is this you? What news from Don Philip? What infamous knavery is now brooding?”

“Impudent rascal!—but proceed, Torquo.”

“I dare say,” continued Carracci, “he would be vastly the better of a little correction; just such another tickling as I lately ordered his neighbour who, by the bye, I am sorry I did not hang. *Good* Mr. Torquo, tell your *worthy* lord, I understand his present intentions; he had

better let the lady remain with her friends, or I will feel inclined to roast him alive. Hark ye, do you hear me, you iniquitous hoary-headed old arch scoundrel, was it not for your grey pate, and that I am certain you would be d—d, I'd blow you to the devil this instant; and take care you don't provoke my indignation by taking an active part in the present infernal plans of your master, or I will positively put you to a cruel death."

"Speak lower," said Don Philip.

"There is no fear of us being overheard in this lonely spot," grumbled Torquo; "as you are at the door of the stone gallery, which never was entered since the night I poiguarded the Lady Clarissa, for which act I forfeited all hopes of mercy—it was a heavy deed—she pleaded so hard—and cried so piteously—was so handsome too; her child, poor thing, it went the same way, long before; yet, her last words were, petitions for mercy on the murderers of both."

“Torquo! Torquo! I can’t bear this, you are growing childish,” said Acasto, falteringly; “despair not; hope the best; you only did a charitable act, knowing she was a burthen to her own existence.”

“Yes, there is something in that; yet what right had I to deprive her of it,” growled the assassin. “But what signifies snivelling, it can’t now be helped.”

Here Alexena and her friend were greatly shocked, but remained motionless.

“Well! well! Belzo Carracci,” continued Don Philip.

“Oh! he stabbed me with his fiery eyes, for I felt the pains of terror inflicted by them, long after he disappeared, and have not ventured across the draw-bridge since.”

“Nor through the subterranean dungeons,” rejoined Acasto.

“Only once, for the purpose of gratifying my curiosity about Geraldina, the peasant’s daughter.”

“And what became of her?”

“Belzo Carracci, it is said, carried her away, and she has not since been heard of.”

“I believe you mentioned,” continued Don Philip, changing the subject, “that you had somewhat to relate concerning the apartments leading to the north tower.”

“Yes,” replied Torquo, in a lower tone, “I believe Satan has taken possession of them, for on going the other evening to light the fire in Donna Alexena’s chamber, according to Margaret’s orders, I had scarce laid the wood on the hearth, before I heard a great noise in the picture gallery, but thought it was only the wind that threw down some of the old portraits; and so was heedless about it, until it was repeated with greater violence. I then instantly pushed aside the pannel, and beheld the figure of a beautiful lady, standing in the long passage. My hair stood up like bristles—my blood froze—and every limb refused motion, being

stiffened with horror, and I am convinced it was the spirit of the unfortunate Signiora Clarissa. She sighed deeply—I groaned, and staggered back—the pannel flew into its place—shut her from my sight—and the next instant I fell senseless on the floor. As this was no delusion, I feel rejoiced that you have brought a *good father* to the castle, whose sanctity will prevent a recurrence of such horrible incidents.”

Here Acasto laughed at the satirical manner Torquo made this observation, which emboldened him to say,

“I suppose he is a rare one—is he not?”

“Yes,” replied Don Philip, “a valuable acquisition.”

“Aye,” observed Torquo, “better at the stiletto than his prayers.”

“I insist you may speak lower,” said Acasto.

“Fear nothing,” replied this agent of iniquity, “I shall not offend his reverence; am I to suppose he has been brought hither to marry you to

the Lady Alexena, who, in good faith, is not only extremely handsome, but mild, gentle, and condescending; at least, Margaret says so; and if nothing more advantageous offers, why not really make her your wife. These fine estates require an heir, and should you tire of her hereafter, a dose of gunpowder will send her to sleep with the Lady Clarissa."

"Savage!" muttered Don Philip, much displeased.

Here their voices became so indistinct, that their expression was utterly unintelligible; however, in a few moments, Torquo proceeded in a louder tone:—

"My lord, what induced you to bring that blustering son of Neptune here;—I mean Williams—he is always disturbing the domestics, and most likely, will induce the *crew in the kitchen* to mutiny; always bawling, shiver my timbers but Lady Alexena is this, and Lady Alexena done that: allow me, and I will shiver his brains

out, otherwise I foresee he will be a troublesome guest. I hate those English dogs, as it is more difficult to induce them to betray an old friend, though in rags, than burn and sink an enemy's squadron."

"He is an excellent seaman," replied Don Philip, "and until I have good grounds to believe him a traitor, shall remain unmolested; but come, the rain is now over, and I wish to pursue my walk."

Shortly after, they disappeared among the distant towers, and when their footsteps had sunk into silence, Alexena threw her arms round Louisa's neck, in the greatest agony imaginable.—

"Oh! my friend," she sobbing, cried, "what will become of us? whither shall we fly to avoid the cruel grasp of those merciless wretches. Oh! Heaven grant me strength to bear the dreadful trials to which I am doomed. Unfortunate Clarissa!—wretched mother!—thy cares are long since hushed in the silence of an early tomb."

“My dearest girl,” said Louisa, “let your reliance be firmly placed in your Almighty Protector, he never abandons innocence; though the virtuous, it is true, have their trials; they only add, when borne with Christian resignation, to their purity and lustre. Therefore, despair not; for great as the apparent danger appears to be, yet I have formed the most sanguine hopes of escape, through the interference of that terrible robber; for why may he not be an instrument of the Divine Will to save us. Report certainly affirms he is cruel, though I have never heard of any particular enormity of which he has been guilty, though I remember many of the generous acts he is said to have performed. But come, let us now retire to our apartment, if we can regain the way; and by supplication to the Throne of Mercy, obtain fortitude to meet our tormentors, without leading them to suppose we know more than they wish; and have we not reason to be thankful, that

Montano does not, as yet, enjoy the confidence of Don Philip ; so we have little to apprehend from his vicious inclinations."



CHAP. V.

“ O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
Her beauty hangs upon the cheek of night,
Like a rich jewel in an Æthiop’s ear ;
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear !”

ROM. & JUL.

A FEW moments after Alexena and her friend reached their chamber, Margaret attended with the key of an adjoining apartment, in which she pointed out a handsome wardrobe prepared for each, containing the most beautiful dresses then worn, and delivered a casket, in which were several sets of jewels for our heroine, with Don Philip’s orders, that she should use them. While the ladies examined their new robes, they were much pleased with Margaret, from her attention, and wishes to oblige them.

“ Dear heart,” said this good creature, “ I hope you will not droop in this lonesome place ; it is now a long time since there was either joy or comfort in it ; but I will try and make it as agreeable as possible ; yet my endeavours will prove useless, unless you obey my lord. Beware, don’t contradict him ; and, above all things, be cautious, lest you name Belzo Carracci, as that alone is sufficient to irritate, nay, enrage him ; but, it may be, you have never heard of that dreadful man.”

Louisa nodded, significantly, to Alexena, to conceal their knowledge of the bandit, and then said, “ What of him ?”

“ Oh ! he is the greatest villain on earth,” rejoined Margaret, “ since I came here, he assassinated my lord’s sister.”

“ Don Philip’s sister !” exclaimed Alexena—“ oh, horrible !”

Again the eye of Louisa met that of our heroine, and she felt ashamed of her precipitancy ; but the late conversation between Torquo and his

master struck her mind so forcibly, and so many confused ideas of Acasto's villainy crowded on her imagination, that, for a moment, she was inclined to believe he had murdered his own sister; but the speaking look of her prudent friend, recalled her scattered thoughts, and she timidly demanded when the fatal event had taken place.

“Some years ago, Donna,”

“And is the poor lady really dead,” said Alexena.

“I believe so, Donna, but I did not see her after she was wounded, as the misfortune happened some miles from the castle, and after the lady Clarissa's wounds were dressed, she was sent to a cottage higher up the cliffs, for the benefit of her health, but has never been heard of since. Torquo, says Carracci, carried her off out of revenge, as he hates Don Philip, because he refuses to wink at his diabolical outrages. But, heaven bless me! ladies, how pale you both are! I fear we have continued too long in the chill air of this apartment.”

Margaret was far from being aware

that her auditors had overheard her master deliberately discuss that atrocious murder ; for when they heard her name—Clarissa, every doubt on the subject vanished, and they were then impressed with the conviction, that the inhuman Acasto, for some sinister view, had barbarously sacrificed his sister, as they had no doubt, but that Clarissa named by Torquo, was the identical person then mentioned by Margaret.

When Alexena somewhat recovered her usual presence of mind, she begged to know was Donna Clarissa married ? “ Oh, yes, Signiora ! though she was very young.” “ Had she any children ?” “ Yes, one fine boy ; but Don Philip sent him away from her, when I was on a visit to some of my friends. On my return, I found my dear lady so sad, that she almost broke my heart. She was so mild, so beautiful, and so kind-hearted, that the greatest savage in this castle would not willingly injure her. Indeed, she then was what you are now, but not quite so beautiful.”

“ Did she ever complain of any particular injury ?” said Louisa.

“ Oh, yes, Signiora ! she bitterly lamented the unkindness of her brother, and yet seemed angry with herself for conceiving a thought prejudicial to his brotherly affection ; but, as she never told her sorrows to any one within these walls, I could not be acquainted with the real cause of them.”

Shortly after, Torquo summoned Alexena and her cousin to the dining parlour, which was sufficient to dispel the fortitude the former had endeavoured to collect, within the last few hours, and the moment Don Philip's messenger departed, she burst into tears.

“ My dear lady,” said Margaret, “ if you give way to this weakness, however justifiable from the cause, I fear you will, indeed, be very wretched. Come, have the goodness to accept the support of this old arm : though weak, it is willing to assist you ; and Signiora Louisa will also lend a little aid.”

She now led her along the gallery, almost enfeebled by terror, while Louisa, whose arm trembled violently, proved she was not a whit less dismayed. As they approached the apartment, their apprehensions increased, and when Don Philip rose to receive Alexena, weakness had completely subdued her, and she sunk to the ground. On reviving, she found Louisa kneeling beside her, and Don Acasto leaning over the sofa on which she had been placed, while Montano, who had already sat down to table, gruffly exclaimed:—

“ Confounded nonsense! are we to lose our dinner, by the affected fears of an artful vixen?” Then addressing our heroine, he continued, “ Let me see you at this table in a very few minutes, or I possibly may induce you to wish you had complied with Don Philip’s invitation, without using the unnecessary ceremony of fainting.”

“ Don’t be brutal, I beg of you,

father," said Acasto, visibly enraged, "you are now to respect this lady as my wife. Believe me, my intentions are greatly changed since we met this morning, and your authority over Lady Alexena ceases from this moment, unless her folly may induce me to withdraw my protection, which I sincerely hope will not be the case."

Montano felt this rebuke, but did not choose to reply, otherwise than by a grin of demoniac malice, expressive of the most savage cruelty, and immediately after, requested to know "whether he should, or should not, have dinner?" Don Philip, though excessively disgusted, did not wish to irritate the monk further, and in a few moments, led the reluctant Alexena to the table, where he placed her at his right hand. Louisa occupied the seat opposite; Montano sat at the bottom of the table; and the place on his left was filled by a stranger, who, before dinner was removed, was understood to be the captain

of the guard, whose business it was to place proper sentinels, and assign their different posts. He had the appearance of a gentleman, though his countenance was of that order which excites distrust; and his was strongly expressive of deep cunning; but though he spoke little, his words, and the subject of them, were well chosen. Fernandez marked the savage manner of Montano, and during the remainder of the evening, assisted Don Philip in his endeavours to tranquillize the mind of Alexena. She observed his kindness, and felt grateful; but to sooth her distracted thoughts, at such a moment, would have been an absolute impossibility. The presence of Montano was an antidote against comfort, and notwithstanding her terrors were somewhat diminished, yet she shuddered with horror, when her eye met that of the ferocious monk. The chamber also, from its gloomy architecture, served to increase her terror; its lofty ceiling

was supported by twelve pillars of jet black marble, on which were engraved many Moorish devices. The windows were high, and of the Gothic order, adding a sombre hue to the entire of the apartment, easier to be conceived than described; but the bright glare of a tremendous wood fire, together with a profusion of wax-lights, in a great measure, dispelled its natural gloom; and had its inmates been other than Acasto and the monk, Alexena would have admired it for its antiquity, and the beauty of its structure, but their detested presence perverted every object, and rendered those things horrible, which, at another period, and under different circumstances, would have appeared fascinating.

Don Philip exerted his utmost powers to dispel the fears of Alexena, and she could not avoid acknowledging, that his address, at least, was that of a gentleman; and her fears of insult would have, in a great measure, been dispelled, had not the savage inuendos

of Montano, almost every instant, awakened the painful recollection of her lamentable situation; but her brutal tormentor seized every opportunity of increasing her distress; and had he not now and then been restrained by a stern glance from Acasto, she could not, consistent with delicacy, remain in the room a moment, nor would she, on any account, had not her fears deprived her of the power of motion. Thus situated, our heroine impatiently looked forward to the hour when old Margaret should attend to conduct her and Louisa to their apartment, while Acasto gazed on her beautiful form with increasing admiration. Her tall and graceful figure, the paragon of symmetry, was habited in a white figured muslin of the finest texture, which admirably displayed the perfections of her shape; her long and polished neck, stripped with ever graceful modesty, partially revealed a lovely bosom, which rivaled the snow in delicate whiteness; her hair, of

glossy blackness, played in sporting curls on her shoulders; her dark brows were beautifully arched; her eyes, inexpressibly brilliant, blue, mild, and expressive, beaming with the softest sensibility; her nose, inclining to the Roman; her teeth, the most delicate pearl, inclosed by lips of glowing ruby; her arms, whiter than polished marble; her hands, beautiful; her feet, small, supporting limbs every way exquisitely proportioned; and her carriage, the emporium of grace, elegance, and dignity. Such was Alexena, then seventeen, a treasury of charms—of purity—of goodness—endowed with every grace, with every virtue, and with every attainable female accomplishment.—Such was the captive of Don Philip Acasto, a wretch void of feeling, insensible to pity or remorse: a monster, whose passions disgraced the man—disgraced humanity—and wounded the feelings of every honourable member of society. In saying thus much, few will find it

difficult to conceive the meaning—the intent—the wishes, conveyed in the rude and insulting glances, directed by his eyes, but which the genuine innocence and spotless purity of Alexena, saved her the painful task of expounding. Had she been acquainted with the wiles, the deceit, the villany, of the world, her fears would have been excited, her peace of mind dreadfully attacked; nay, her own shadow would have excited alarm, and every thought conjured up a villain; but heaven saved this spotless votary of transcendent virtue those bitter pangs, and frightened the demons of suspicion, who wistfully hovered round, watching a favourable moment for wounding her bosom with the poison of torturing suspicion.

Margaret, at length, entered to conduct the ladies to their chamber, and Don Philip permitted them to retire, but attended Alexena to the foot of the great stairs, where he reluctantly wished her a good night, and then sighing deeply, slowly returned to his companions.

CHAP. VI.

Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy ;
 Thy school-days frightful, desperate, wild, and furious ;
 Thy prime of manhood, daring, bold, and venturous ;
 Thy age confirmed, proud, subtle, sly, and bloody.

RICHARD III.

OUR heroine had been dreadfully agitated by the disgusting attentions of Don Philip ; his sigh at parting, convinced her she had every thing to fear from the effects of his detestable passion, and found much difficulty in supporting her tottering frame to her chamber, where, the moment she entered, she burst into tears. Louisa was quite low spirited, and for some time incapable of using any endeavours to reassure her weeping friend ; while poor Margaret, who had been busily engaged at the fire, or pretended to be so, could not restrain her feelings, and as she wiped away the fast falling tears, murmured :—

“ Alas ! alas ! this is the very chamber in which my lovely lady Clarissa

used to take on so, and weep by the hour. Poor mourner! many is the sad and solitary day have I sat by her on this bed, where she invoked the spirit of her husband to watch over and protect her from the cruelties of Don Philip; she would then fondly press her dear babe closer to her bosom, and bathe his infant cheeks with tears, while I vainly endeavoured to sooth her griefs, though Heaven knows, ill able to bear my own. Oh! ladies, this castle is sadly altered since my dear lord, Don Miguel's death, oh! may a curse rest on the heads of his vile murderers."

"Merciful Providence!" exclaimed Alexena, "was he murdered? Oh! how? when? and by what means did Don Philip become the owner of this mansion?"

Margaret shook her head, then gazing wildly round, in a low voice said, "Those walls have ears, nay, mouths; therefore, my dear ladies, let us change the subject, for I have reason to fear

my own shadow ; not from any crimes I have committed, thank Heaven, but because such strange sights are seen here, that the idea of them has often almost froze my blood."

"What sights? what do you mean?" demanded Louisa, fearfully.

"Why," replied Margaret, "I have more than once seen the spirit of Don Miguel, in the armoury, and several times, in the library, clothed in complete mail; but though he always, at those times, carried a naked sword, he never looked fiercely on me; his countenance was pale, and expressive of pity, but I never had more than a moment's time to observe it. Indeed, I wonder I have not been more terrified. The first time we met, was in the north corridor, and I instantly informed Don Philip, who threatened to shoot me, if ever I again mentioned such folly; so since that period I have been silent on this dreadful subject, and, I trust, you will never repeat what I have now communicated. Should my lamented lord

cross your path, fear him not; he was too kind, too religious, and too tender-hearted, in his life time, to excite any fears now that he is dead, except those which awe naturally inspires."

"I fear the living only," said Alexena, "from the dead I have nothing to fear; yet Heaven, I trust, will not put my fortitude to the dreadful trial of encountering a wandering spirit, as I feel my strength would be unequal to the task."

The castle clock now mournfully tolled eleven, and Margaret hastily rose to retire. She was surprised at the lateness of the hour; but had not the idea of her late lord, pressed on her recollection, she would willingly have remained some time longer. After bestowing her blessing on Alexena and her friend, she reluctantly retired, and hastened, with all the speed her age and strength would admit of, through the long deserted gallery, that lay between their chamber and the apartments below. Her words made a considerable

impression on the minds of her late auditors; for although they believed Margaret's fears had created a spectre, yet the murder of Don Miguel, and the mysterious circumstances attending that event, impressed on their minds a sad conviction, that Don Philip was a villain.

While Louisa's thoughts were thus engaged, she gazed with all the fond solicitude of sisterly affection, on the beauteous form of Alexena, who, she felt assured, was the most lovely of women; but the conviction was accompanied with the painful idea, that she was likely to fall a victim to the cruelty of Acasto, or droop under the unprovoked insults of the unfeeling Montano, unless rescued by the immediate interposition of an Almighty Providence. "What are we not both doomed to suffer," said Louisa, "from those unrelenting barbarians? and if insulted, to whom are we to look for redress? to fly beyond those walls is impossible, and who will protect us within?—

Torquo, the assassin of Clarissa!—
Oh! horrible.”

With streaming eyes she now took the hand of Alexena, and then kneeling together, their spirits sought the Father of Purity, whose Heavenly protection they earnestly intreated. Their orisons soothed their spirits, and hushed the agitation of their minds. which, by degrees, obtained their wonted serenity, and they retired to rest, confidently relying on the protection of Heaven.

Not so Don Philip, he sought his downy couch, wearied with the rude contest of conflicting passions, and seldom slept, but to awake in horror. The dreadful images which guilt presented to his sleeping fancy, inflicted torments of the most terrible description; and when once awake, he feared to sleep again. The terrors of his blood-stained conscience, compelled him to keep an attendant constantly in his chamber; for he often started from his bed, when labouring under those torturing illusions, and frightened his

watchful domestic with his terrifying cries, or deep and lengthened groans, which threatened to rend his heart. If the lamp in his chamber chanced to expire during the night, either by accident, or the heedlessness of his servant, he was in agony until its light again restored fancied security, and dare not allow his eye to wander over the gloomy expanse of his chamber, lest some horrible shadow would start from its shade, to blast his sight, or reproach him for the crimes which he had the hardy barbarity to perpetrate. Yet, while the sun's vivifying rays were visible, none were braver or more determined than Acasto; but when encompassed by the shades of night, he was a very coward, and never passed through the unfrequented parts of the castle, without torches, pistols, and his shadow—the merciless Torquo.

Montano's reflections were not a whit more agreeable than those of his abandoned lord; he was nightly wrecked with the stings and arrows of a guilty

conscience." The most whimsical and extraordinary fears disturbed his repose; but they were not of the supernatural kind; he dreaded the just vengeance of the injured Mortimer; and there was no alternative that he was not pre-determined to embrace, for the final extinction of this dreaded foe, whom he continued to hate with the most unbounded and diabolical malevolence; but the designs of Providence are as just as they are inscrutable, and the fabric he had raised for the destruction of the innocent, fell, at length, with a dreadful crash on his guilty and self-devoted head. Devoted, because he was the voluntary slave of every guilty and baleful passion—avarice, hatred, lust, ingratitude, robbery, and, at length, oh! fatal effects of sinful indulgence—murder! From that hour, peace and mercy fled to Heaven, and never again visited his guilty bosom. Indeed, notwithstanding the enormity of his offences, they often held out the olive branch; often besought him to repent; but he despised their wholesome admo-

nitions, and continued to pursue the broad and beaten path, leading to endless woe; and, at length, ignominiously passed from this life into awful eternity, without pity, without remorse, without hope; cursing and accursed; each day of his hideous existence brought new torments; he slept to awake in that misery which he had not only the means, but the choice of avoiding; yet his uncontroled and evil passions hurried him from crime to crime, until the idea of repentance became dead within his iron bosom, and from that moment his feet appears to have received wings, to waft him with greater celerity to those scenes of infamy, disgrace, wretchedness, and vice, in which he became a conspicuous actor. But the awful period approached, when his guilty life should be offered as an atonement to the outraged laws of his offended country, and in expiation of the almost numberless offences which were written in characters of blood, and entered in the book of fate against him.

CHAP. VII.

“Thou shalt be punish’d for thus frightening me,
 For I am sick, and capable of fears,
 Opprest with wrongs, and therefore full of fears
 * * * * *
 * * * * *
 With my vex’d spirits I cannot take a truce,
 But they will quake and tremble all this day.”

KING JOHN.

WHEN the receding footsteps of Margaret were no longer distinguishable, Louisa securely fastened the door of their chamber, and shortly after joined Alexena in fervent prayer to the Almighty; returning grateful thanks for his gracious mercies, and intreating a continuance of his protection; then undressed, with the soothing reflection, that they had always strenuously endeavoured to deserve it. The following morning, our lovely heroine was much more composed than could be expected; her mind had gained considerable strength from her intercourse with the Deity, and she trusted she

would be able to bear future trials, with fortitude and resignation. Louisa was the most affectionate of friends, and felt inexpressible pleasure, on observing the serenity of her fair cousin, and used every exertion to make it permanent. To her fine natural understanding was added, a considerable share of beauty; her hair black, her eyes bright, animated, and sparkling, her figure that of the middle size, elegantly formed, her temper rather warm, her disposition gentle, yet when roused by injury or oppression, assumed a degree of steadiness, of fearless resolution, rarely found in woman. She quickly resented an offence, but as speedily forgave one; her birth was noble, and she had been taught every accomplishment suitable to her high rank; but there was a something so peculiarly engaging in Alexena's every word, look, and action, which insensibly attracted our warmest affection; she gained our esteem, nay, our love, without being aware of her power, and

generally found that admiration without seeking, which others often seek in vain. Louisa was at this period, twenty; Alexena only seventeen.—The former had experienced many of the disappointments of this world, and was able to form a just estimate of the interests which sway men in general, by which she often avoided misfortune; or derived advantage. Alexena, on the contrary, was unacquainted with the perfidy of mankind, and willingly believed those, whose professions were kind and specious, until bitter experience convinced her of the fallacy of this erroneous opinion. The last ten months had witnessed a variety of cruel disappointments, to which she had been exposed; but in enumerating them, her heart whispered they were only trials of her patience, which, if borne with Christian resignation, would one day be compensated for, by future happiness. Louisa frequently told her, those unpleasant occurrences were wisely allowed, to give a greater relish,

a higher zest, for future enjoyments ; but those promised joys were yet far distant. The cup of sorrow was prepared ; but she had yet scarce tasted the baleful draught ; her fortitude and patience were about to be called on to support her through a scene of calamitous circumstances, which the impatience and uncontrollable passions of Acasto, and the inordinate avarice of Montano, promised to bring to a speedy and fatal conclusion.

During the three first weeks of Alexena's confinement in the castle, she had been exposed to the most cruel insults from Montano, accompanied by the fulsome and repeated declarations of Acasto's love ; and one evening that his preposterous suit had driven her to the solitude of her apartment, at an unusual early hour, she informed Louisa that it was her determination to explore every accessible part of the castle that night. " I may," she said, " find some outlet by which we may escape. If not, I will, at least, have

the consolation of thinking I left no means untried to effect our emancipation."

"I approve of your intentions," replied Louisa, "and shall, if you are resolved, procure torches, and accompany you. I am acquainted with many passages of this horrible abode, long since deserted, and should we not be able, as you say, to discover some mode of escape, we may, at least, find a secure, though temporary, retreat, which will protect us for the present from any infamous attempt Don Philip may be induced to make; and as we have nothing to fear from supernatural enemies, I see no reason why we should delay a search that may have the most beneficial tendency."

Elated with hopes of speedy enlargement, they resolved the terrible investigation should take place that very night, as there was a possibility it might deliver them from the tyranny and cruel persecution of their implac-

able foe. Therefore, pursuant to their arrangement, as soon as the great clock of the castle tolled that dismal hour "when church-yards yawn," (twelve,) they stole forth from their chamber, with fluttering hearts and cautious steps, entering that long and dreary gallery which led to the great stairs; but they turned to the left, and traversed a corridor, which, from the narrative of Margaret, promised to conduct them to the south tower, once the residence of the unfortunate Clarissa. As they moved through the gloom of those antiquated passages, their hearts trembled at the noise of their own footsteps. Sometimes they stood mute as statues, convinced they heard groans; but in those moments, when fear threatened to congeal our heroine, Louisa would represent the cause of their alarm to be nothing more than the sighing of the night breeze, through those uninhabited and forsaken chambers; and though almost torpid with unaccountable awe herself, she tried

to calm the agitation of her lovely friend.

“ Providence,” she said, “ seems to have granted this terrible moment for our attempt, and if we neglect to seize it, we may never again have the same opportunity; therefore, I beg you will not allow your fortitude to be subdued by idle fears, but let us, assisted by heaven, proceed in this our arduous undertaking.”

Thus encouraged, the timid Alexena advanced through innumerable suites of desolate apartments, supported by the arm of her trembling friend, and after pursuing their lonely search through many dismal branches of this immense pile, they found themselves at the foot of a spiral stair-case, which seemed to lead to some lone and solitary tower. The chill air, extreme dreariness of the spot, and solemnity of the hour, almost forbade the trembling wanderers to ascend; but to return was as painful as to proceed. They beheld each other, in shivering silence, and

feared to trust their own voices, lest they should summon some horrible spectre ; but after a few minutes passed in hesitation and dumb show, they ascended, and on reaching the landing place, found one solitary door half open, which presented an obstacle that fear made almost insurmountable—as some dreadful sight might await them within its gloom. Louisa ventured to touch it, and raise her torch, that light might reassure her ; but nothing was discernible in its profound darkness. She again hesitated, and looked wistfully at the stairs ; but the lower steps were lost in obscurity, and she resolved to enter the room. The dampness had removed the curl from their hair, which now hung in loose tresses on their necks ; death's pale shadows played on their countenances ; their trembling knees knocked against each other, and yet they ventured to enter the chamber. It was a square apartment, without furniture, from which there was an

entrance into a long-neglected corridor, that was apparently situated in the attic story of the castle. Again fear opposed further research; but triumphant curiosity impelled them forward: it was irresistible; and with palpitating hearts, and eyes ready to burst their sockets, they advanced into the deserted passage, and from thence wandered into an immense range of apartments, whose decayed furniture, and mouldering tapestry, proved the neglect in which they had been suffered to remain, while it also evinced the power of the all-withering hand of time. They were, at length, about to enter the last of those desolate chambers, when their fearful and attentive ears caught the sound of receding footsteps. Instantly every limb became motionless; every pore distilled cold perspiration; unnerved and trembling, they stood in ghastly expectation, unable to fly; each fleeting moment, in breathless agony, convinced that the next would present to their inhorrid view, the musty bones

of some decayed skeleton; but conceive their emotion and surprise, on hearing the dulcet notes of the most delicate and soul-reviving harmony. The sounds seemed celestial, and the sensations of our truants were those of awe, wonder, fear, and astonishment. Firmly transfixed—every nerve unstrung—their late pliant limbs now stiffened; how was it possible to move. They seemed spell-bound—rivited to the spot on which they stood. To advance was horror: the glare of their flaming, bickering torches, cast dark red gleams on the damp and obscure walls of this desolate chamber, raising in their imagination, figures flitting through the distant shade.—The music advanced—footsteps were again distinguishable—a distant rumbling noise increased their terror. Alexena, frantically, caught the arm of Louisa, who was scarce able to support her own tottering frame; while, with distended eyes, strained almost to convulsive agony, and which seemed ready

to start from their expanded paling, they anxiously watched the decayed and worm-eaten door at the opposite extremity of the apartment. "Oh! horror!" faltered Louisa, "it shakes—the bolts recede from their rusty fastenings."

Unable to support themselves, they sunk on their knees, clasping each other's trembling waists, and the following moment, the door slowly revealed to these astonished and terrified friends, the lovely form of one of their own soft sex. Surprise held them in a trance of silent wonder; their sensations became insupportably painful, and a minute almost elapsed before Alexena could summon courage to raise her torch, that its strong light might give a more accurate view of the motionless figure before her. All doubts of the form being real, having vanished, she, in a low faint voice, apologized for trespassing on her solitude, and assured the stranger, that her intrusion did not arise from

idle impertinence, or inexcusable curiosity. The fair, unknown, seemed totally insensible to this address, and when Louisa ventured to rise from her kneeling posture, the door, which but a moment before discovered her, now, with a horrible crash, shut her from their sight, and all again was vacuity and silence.

“May God protect us!” said Alexena, fervently.

“Amen!” ejaculated Louisa. Amen! rolled along the distant gallery—Amen! echoed the surrounding chambers.—Louisa shook like an aspen; again Alexena clung to the arm of her friend. “Let us retire from this scene of horror; we may yet reach our chamber,” said the former. “I am ready,” whispered her agitated companion.

Almost petrified with fear, they slowly retreated backward, still keeping their labouring eyes fixed on the horrible door, which they were firmly persuaded, led to some gloomy sepulchre. At length they reached the spot where

they had entered, and turned to leave the chamber; but imagine their sensations on beholding the door-way filled by the gigantic figure of a gloomy warrior; his armour was black, which was partly concealed by a mantle, and whose colour it was impossible to ascertain. The dark nodding plumes that waved over his brow, added something awfully horrible to his martial appearance, and increased the agitation of Alexena, then amounting almost to frenzy. Though what could be distinguished of the black knight's countenance, was the reverse of frightful; yet it was utterly impossible either of our terrified adventurers could summon courage to address him. He appeared to wish to advance, but seemed unwilling to add to their terrors, which were increased by some new noise. The castle bell tolled one; the sound was like the melancholy and dull note of a death knell. The figure raised his head—started from his position—cast a look of the deepest

interest on Alexena, and stalking by her, vanished through a door adjacent to that which had so mysteriously closed on the female figure, a few minutes before.

Terror of the most alarming kind, now deprived Alexena of respiration; and, with a deep groan, she sunk senseless on the floor, leaving Louisa in indescribable agony. Her fall, which the latter was unable to prevent, shook the old chamber, and added terrors for her personal safety.

“ Oh! heaven have mercy; she will perish for want of assistance!” exclaimed Louisa, “ and I have neither volatile or water. Alas! I am unable to bear her back to her apartment, if I should be even so fortunate as to find my way.”

Again the door, the frightful door, opened, and again the female appeared. She paused for a moment, and then advanced into the chamber. Louisa, conceiving she was a spectre come to bear away the insensible form of her

friend, stood gazing on her in motionless horror; but was quickly and agreeably undeceived, when the lovely stranger, in a most plaintive voice, begged to know could she render any assistance.

“Alas!” said Louisa, whose idle apprehensions then vanished, “I know not; my friend has been overpowered by the damp air of those apartments, and has sunk into insensibility.

“I am extremely unhappy, lest my unexpected appearance has added terror to the other sufferings of Lady Alexena,” replied this unknown, “and I feel distressed, lest fear may have occasioned her present indisposition.

Louisa, now delighted and encouraged by this address, acknowledged that extreme timidity was really the cause, “and my inability,” she continued, “of affording her immediate relief, induced me to call so loudly; indeed I became quite alarmed, lest I should not be able to either restore animation, or convey her to our cham-

ber, which is situated in a very distant part of this building."

"Very distant, indeed," said the fair stranger, "but I can conduct you to it without difficulty, as soon as your friend is somewhat better."

Alexena's deep sighs, at the commencement of this conversation, gave the joyful assurance, that she was fast reviving; her head rested on the bosom of Louisa, while the unknown applied volatiles, and used every possible exertion to restore animation.

"She will be quite well presently," observed the latter, "but lest my unexpected appearance should cause a relapse, I will retire until she is satisfied her fears are groundless. Lovely, interesting girl! I am an unfortunate, isolated, persecuted female, like yourself, from whom you have nothing to fear; and were you acquainted with the story of my life, you would find there are others in this world still more wretched than you at présent can possibly be." The stranger then hastened

under the shade of one of the stately columns which supported the ceiling, while Alexena, who had indistinctly heard the latter part of the conversation, without being able to recal the late events, raised her eyes to those of her friend, and in accents of the bitterest woe, demanded had she seen the shade of Mortimer. "Good heaven!" exclaimed Louisa, dreadfully agitated, "your mind wanders; Lord Mortimer is well. Look up, my dear Alexena, and let your fears vanish. The lady who has been the innocent cause of our recent terror, is an unfortunate stranger, to whom I am indebted for that assistance which has restored you to animation."

"Oh! where is she?—where has she vanished?" said Alexena, wildly—still in evident terror.

"She has withdrawn, to give you a moment to recover your scattered thoughts."

"I feel obliged by her delicacy; but I wish to behold her again."

“ Then I feel pleasure in gratifying your wish,” said the stranger, as she advanced from the gloom, “ and I trust you will have the goodness to forgive the alarm I unintentionally caused.”

Our heroine gazed on her approaching figure, with fear, awe, and yet with pleasure, and answered her kind inquiries with a trembling timidity, which she in vain endeavoured to suppress.

“ My dearest madam,” said Alexena, “ I sincerely thank you for your attention. The chill air of those dreary apartments, aided by idle fears, of which I now feel ashamed, quite subdued my weak spirits ; but I have trespassed too long on your kindness. May I intreat you will have the goodness to accompany us to our chamber, where there is a fire, which, I trust, you will find grateful, after being, for such a length of time, exposed to the almost deadly coldness of the night breeze.”

The stranger was unwilling to refuse, yet hesitated ; but, at length assented,

on condition that her visit, together with her very existence, should be a profound secret. To this Alexena and her friend promised strict attention, and instantly after, followed their unknown friend with all the haste their strength would admit of, towards their apartment. It was some time before they observed she led them by a direction different from that by which they had reached the late scene of their terrors. Somewhat alarmed, they stopped for a moment, and begged to know whether she was certain of the right direction.

“ Oh! most assuredly I am,” she replied; “ fear nothing, and follow me in silence.”

The next moment brought them into a corridore, which terminated in a spiral staircase; this they descended, and their guide then produced a small key, which she applied to a lock ingeniously concealed in the wall, the bolt of which was no sooner withdrawn, than the party were admitted into

Alexena's apartment, and to their incredible surprise, found their mirror formed the door which they heretofore conceived was immovably fastened to the wainscot. This the stranger carefully closed, and was then led to a chair by Louisa, while Alexena pressed her to partake of some refreshments which the attentive Margaret was always careful they should be plentifully supplied with. Her appetite, however, was by no means better than that of her kind friends; and supper being hastily removed, she, in accents of the most touching sweetness, addressed Alexena, again apologizing for the fright her unexpected appearance had occasioned, saying, she sincerely trusted it would not be the cause of any serious indisposition, and intreated our heroine to seek that repose, of which her pallid looks and weary eyes clearly indicated she stood much in need; but the latter would not retire so precipitately, avowing, she felt perfectly well, and had not the least inclination to sleep.

“ Well, then,” said the fair stranger, “ may I suppose you are anxious to know who the person is that has alarmed you at such an hour in the deserted chambers of the Castle of Santa Marco? Believe me, I should feel miserable, if you were to form an opinion which might be inimical to our further intercourse, therefore, if not trespassing on your patience, I will inform you of the eventful incidents of my life, and trust, the relation will not depress me in your esteem, who I have been taught to value so highly.” Alexena looked anxiously at Louisa for an explanation of those words, which the stranger observing, said, “ I have been led to venerate the character of Alexena de Guzman; how, and where, I first heard of her, will appear in the course of that narrative which I am about to relate, and trust, she will have the goodness to believe, that a daughter of the house of Santa Marco is in capable of uttering a falsehood.”

“ Merciful Powers!” exclaimed

Louisa, "is it possible, that one of the descendants of this castle yet exists?"

"Yes, in me you behold one, and the most unfortunate of all my family; but as morning approaches, I shall keep you no longer in suspense."

She then gave her attentive auditors the following relation.



CHAP. VIII.

"An honest tale speeds best, being plainly told."

RICHARD III.

"**I** FEEL convinced you will be surprised, when I tell you, I am that Clarissa, whom Margaret led you to imagine was the sister of Don Philip, and who perished by the stiletto of Belzo Carracci. Alas! I am, indeed, that miserable being, and to the merciless cruelty of Acasto I am indebted, for all the numerous evils which have, at length, reduced me to the humiliating alternative of accepting a shelter in the subterranean dungeons of this house, of which,

since my brother's death, I ought to be the acknowledged mistress. Most unfortunately, however, that brother who would have protected me, fell an early victim to his open goodness of heart—to the treachery and vile machinations of a wretch, who, by false professions, was, for a period, honored by the sacred name of friend, but who really deserved no better title than that of villain. It is almost needless to inform you, this monster was Don Philip, who, under the mask of friendship, concealed the most corrupt of hearts. The first time I had the misfortune to see him, was with my brother in Madrid, to whom he had been introduced by my late unfortunate husband, Don Selib Del Harco, who was, at that period, acknowledged the most elegant and accomplished cavalier in the city. To him Acasto brought the most flattering letters of recommendation, which he had easily obtained from my Selib's uncle, then residing in Lisbon.—Fatal, fatal, introduction! It led to the immediate ruin of both my

brother and husband, which often since has impressed on my mind the conviction, that we cannot be too circumspect in our inquiries relative to the characters we introduce to our friends, or to their families. Those who form hasty and inconsiderate opinions of men, in general, are frequently erroneous, and are apt to regret their want of prudence when too late. Many there are in society, who, from the speciousness of their manners, hide their vices under the dark cloak of dissimulation, and by that means escape detection; but if exposed to public view, would be objects of universal contempt, if not of abhorrence; and such a character was Acasto, who, being a perfect adept in the art of deception, “seemed the rose, but was the serpent under it.” My brother was not long intimate with Don Philip, until he imbibed a partiality for gaming—that most detestable of vices, to which his hours, in a short time, became totally devoted, while his other amusements were neglected, in order

that he might pursue, with unrestrained indulgence, this worthless propensity ; and, surely, of all human passions, it is the most despicable and degrading. However, Don Philip contrived to draw him on by insensible degrees, designedly allowing him to win small sums, as a bait, by which he might lure him to destruction, and strip him of his entire patrimony—Acasto succeeded, and Don Miguel became a beggar. The estate on which this castle stands, was the last remnant of his broken fortunes, and with it he lost his life, to insure to its present abhorred possessor, peaceable enjoyment. Thus it ever happens, that one crime draws on another, until the cup of infamy is full, which, at length, overflows, drowning the guilty wretch in its poison. Many are the sighs—many are the bitter tears, that Acasto has wrung from the agonized mothers of those children, whose fathers were irretrievably ruined, and driven houseless on a pitiless world, by that monster's rapacious villany. By gambling, how

many has he reduced to wretchedness—to despair—to self destruction ; how many has he deprived of every earthly comfort ; how many have perished in a loathsome prison ; how many fallen by the hand of the executioner ; how many banished from their native land ; how many from everlasting happiness, by the crimes that this vice, and his demoniac spirit drove them to the commission of. Oh ! my friends, I fear they are innumerable, but an All-just Power, for a time, allows such wickedness, in order to accomplish its own unerring and immutable decrees.”

“ Don Philip prolonged his visit to Madrid, by several petty pretences ; unwilling to depart, until he and his vile associates should possess the last pistole of his two unsuspecting friends. Don Selib, indeed, had little to lose ; therefore, a short period was sufficient to effect his ruin ; but the immense possessions of my brother, required more time ; they were a bait too enticing for the subtle Portuguese to relinquish, without using every exertion to obtain them ;

beside, their acquisition opened a path to the promised completion of schemes of a most diabolical nature, which his incorrigible villany flattered him he would be able to perpetrate. Don Miguel was every thing he could wish ; confiding, open-hearted, generous, and being a man of the strictest honor, was unsuspecting, believing those in whom he placed confidence, equally so. However, the moment rapidly approached, when he was to be painfully awakened from those dreams of imagined integrity, in which he had placed a too ruinous reliance.

“ Already his gloomy and care-worn brow, loss of appetite, long fits of musing, and sullen pettishness, which, from my earliest recollection, were unusual with him, awakened my fears, and induced me to seek the cause of his uneasiness ; but he refused to acquaint me with the real fact, and Selib, who had also grown gloomy, sullen, and discontented, was equally careful to conceal the source of his vexation,

though his awkward attempts, instead of quieting my fears or suspicions, only served to excite them; and such was the aspect of our affairs the third month after the arrival of Don Philip. One evening, on which Don Miguel returned some hours earlier than usual, he summoned me to his private study, where, with all the impetuosity of frenzy, vowed he was irretrievably ruined. As soon as grief, surprise, and consternation would permit, I anxiously required a relation of the particulars, and too soon learned the fatal cause. Don Philip and his emissaries, who it was more than suspected were vile sharpers, had stripped him of all his vast possessions, even this ancient castle, which had for ages borne our name. Imagine my grief and terror—for some moments I was incapable of either making a reply, or offering my advice, but when somewhat composed, I begged his acceptance of my fortune, then in the hands of a most respectable merchant in Madrid, entreating he would purchase

this our ancient mansion. He gazed on me for a moment in silent admiration, then clasped me to his breast, and while the tears of brotherly affection fell on my bosom, he, in the most solemn manner, refused to accept of a single crown. Recollect, said he, you promised your hand to my friend Selib, and with it he is entitled to your fortune, besides, I fear my entreaties have reduced him to much the same situation in which I am at present, and should, therefore, think myself highly criminal, if I wilfully added further injury; but do not despair, my dear Clarissa, there is yet a gleam of hope, as it is confidently affirmed by men of high respectability in the city, that Acasto has played foul, and should I be so fortunate as to convict him of this infamous charge, I shall not only regain my property, but be avenged by exposing the villain to public scorn and contempt. I felt somewhat relieved by this information, and when I had obtained a promise from my brother, that

he would not act, except with the utmost caution, and, if possible, avoid resorting to violent measures, I reluctantly consented to his calling on Acasto for an explanation of his conduct, and for a refutation of the baseness with which he was charged, if in his power to give it; if not, to demand the restoration of his property, accompanied with a command to leave the capital next morning, on pain of being exposed to ignominy and disgrace. Shortly after, Don Miguel hurried into the street, and I watched the moment of his return, with anxious inquietude; at length he arrived, accompanied by Don Selib and our confessor, at which I was much surprised; but imagine my astonishment, on his leading me into his study, where he told me, he expected to see me the wife of his friend in less than an hour. In the utmost alarm, lest his intellect should have been deranged, in consequence of his late misfortunes, I entreated him to retire to his chamber; he guessed my thoughts, and in the

gentlest accents of kindness, urged his request. 'Believe me, my dearest sister,' said he, as he tenderly embraced me; 'it is to insure your happiness that I am thus urgent, and not to gratify any whimsical or capricious desire of my own, nor to comply with the ardent wishes of Don Selib, who, I pledge myself, is in total ignorance of my resolution; for I could not possibly inform him of his intended felicity, until I had first obtained your approbation.' I thanked him for this instance of delicate attention to my feelings, but begged to decline an immediate marriage, unless he would satisfy me, that the urgency of his reasons were unexceptionable. "Clarissa, said he, impressively, observe me, I can have no motive, save your welfare; my reasons I will explain at a future period, and pledge myself, they are such as are entitled to, and must meet, your approbation; but, notwithstanding what I have said, should you persist in your determination of delaying the happiness of your lover, I swear

most solemnly never more to hold converse, or have communication, with you; no! not during the remaining period of my existence; you can't have more than a few minutes to deliberate, therefore, however cruelly circumstanced, you must determine quickly. Though thus reduced to a deplorable dilemma, a minute's reflection convinced me it was better to yield with a good grace, as I had nothing to fear or be dissatisfied with, except this mysterious haste; therefore, relying on Selib's love, and Don Miguel's brotherly affection, I placed my hand within his, at the same time saying it was at his disposal: 'tis impossible, said I, you can injure my peace, I confide implicitly on your honour; my hand and heart are both Selib's, from this moment do with me as you will. He gazed on me in ecstasy, folded me again and again to his bosom, and bathed my pale cheeks with his tears. In the name of heaven I demanded, what is the cause of this agita-

tion—this violent emotion? Oh! torture me not with suspense. “Ask me not, I beseech you, my darling, my beloved sister, I hope very shortly to explain my motives to your satisfaction, but at present it is utterly impossible.” He then hurried away for the purpose of informing Selib of his happiness; but before he retired, said, it was unnecessary I should make any alteration in my dress. In a few minutes I was led to the saloon, where Selib, the good father, and a few of the oldest domestics of the family were already assembled, and from the violent agitation of the former, I felt assured he was unacquainted with this sudden arrangement, even on his entering the house. After waiting a few moments for my cousin Isabella, we stood up, and I became the wife of Don Selib. This altogether was so like the vision of a distempered fancy, that I was unwilling to believe myself awake, but the congratulations of my family soon dispelled the idea of an illusion; and immediately after

supper, my brother again embraced me, with a tenderness that excited fears—vague suspicions of—I know not what; and when he retired, I felt very uneasy, as Selib could not explain his mysterious conduct. On entering the breakfast-room the following morning, I inquired for Don Miguel, and became exceedingly alarmed, when informed by one of the servants, that he had been absent during the night. Selib instantly set out in pursuit of him; but had scarce left the house, ere my maid brought me a letter, which she found in my cabinet. The superscription was the hand-writing of Don Miguel, and I instantly broke the seal; then, with a fluttering heart, read those words, which are indelibly imprinted on my memory:—

“ My dearest Clarissa—Before you peruse those few lines, your unfortunate brother may be in awful eternity, or languishing in the gloomy dungeons of a prison. I am ruined beyond hope, by the vile artifices of that most

detestable of villains, Acasto. In my interview with him last night, he had the presumption, the daring effrontery, to make an infamous proposal for you, my sister; but I shall not wound your delicacy by an explicit detail. Let it suffice, the wretch demanded your hand, not as his wife, but, oh, torture! as —: conceiving I should sacrifice your honour to my interest. The result is easily imagined. I demanded instant satisfaction. We drew, fought, and Philip fell! Conceiving him badly wounded, I sent for surgical aid; but judge my surprise, on being informed he only received a slight scratch, having feigned inability to fight; relying on my honour for his forfeited life.— When the surgeons arrived, he sent a messenger for an alguazil and other officers, before whom he deposed, I wounded him unfairly, with intent to murder, having urgent reasons for wishing the removal of a man, who was so intimately acquainted with my trea-

sonable practices, and with a conspiracy which I had formed against the person of his majesty, and for the subversion of the constitution. With the story of this pretended conspiracy, I am yet unacquainted; but warrants have been issued for my apprehension, and as Acasto, his steward, Torquo, and several others, have also sworn to the truth of this horrible fabrication, I am advised to retire to Portugal or Italy, for the present, or until such time as the king can be convinced of my innocence. In half an hour, I will be on the road to the Italian States, and shall write to you again on my arrival at Toledo; which place I hope to reach by sun-set to-morrow.— Advise Selib to retire to Santa Marco for the present; for if once within its walls, you may remain in perfect security, as he is acquainted with all the private and secret outlets. You are now, I trust, satisfied with the reasons which induced me to insist on your

bestowing your hand on Selib, as I have secured you from the matchless villany of Acasto, by giving you the sacred protection of a husband, a man of honour—one who adores, and is worthy of your love. He will defend you from the artifices of such wretches as Philip, and I sincerely hope you will long enjoy the felicity which, I make no doubt, your worthy husband will use every exertion to bestow. You have, inclosed, a draft on your banker, for the entire of your fortune. Confide it to Selib: he is worthy of the trust; and may all the heavenly angels take you both under their holy protection.”

“ It is useless to say what my feelings were, on reading that fatal letter. From a state of insensibility, I awoke to intolerable sufferings. Don Selib was supporting me in his arms, using every exertion to restore my peace, while I passionately demanded tidings of my brother; but my husband’s frenzied

looks forbade inquiry; yet, to withhold information, he was convinced, would only inflict the tortures of suspense, and, when sufficiently composed, he explained the danger of remaining many hours longer in Madrid. Terrified by new fears, I urged our immediate flight, and though undetermined how to act, we left my brother's house, and retired to a small cottage, in a lonely part of the suburbs, where we resolved to remain until we had certain information of Don Miguel's destination. On the fourth day after his departure, his faithful servant, Henriquez, returned with the fatal news of his death. He had been way-laid—inhumanly murdered—and when dead, the assassins carried off his body; from which moment, all trace of him had been lost. Sorrows came not singly; for very shortly after, Selib was proclaimed a traitor, and an immense reward offered for his apprehension. To remain longer in Madrid, was to insure destruction. We, there-

fore, left it in the shades of night, accompanied by Henriquez, and made all possible haste towards Lisbon, where we intended to reside, until we could ascertain the final determination of his majesty, who had confiscated the remaining property of my brother, which was very trifling. Selib had converted my fortune into gold, which was fully equivalent to satisfy our moderate wishes ; but the fickle goddess seemed resolved to persecute us, as we were plundered by banditti, and reached Lisbon in extreme distress. There was an uncle of my husband's residing in that city, named Felix Del Harco, who possessed immense wealth, and from whom my Selib had large expectations. By this relative we were kindly and hospitably received, as he was then unacquainted with our dreadful change of fortune ; and in his house my infant son first saw the light, who, for a short time, dispelled the gloom that was fast gathering round us. Some demon, who had heard our

disgrace in Madrid, blasted our hopes and character, by the propagation of the most infamous falsehoods, which, in less than three months after the birth of my boy, caused a visible alteration in the manners of Don Felix and his lady. The latter was a woman of narrow education, brought up in the most gross ignorance by her father, one of the merchants of the city, who, by rigid industry, and strict attention to business, had amassed a large fortune. Donna Del Harco, by meanness and ingenuity, found the true situation of my Selib's circumstances, and ever after, availed herself of every opportunity of insulting and torturing my feelings with a repetition of them. Before strangers, her rudeness and vulgarity were insufferable: at one moment affecting pity for our misfortunes; the next, displaying her generosity, in granting us the shelter of her roof: frequently reviling the memory of my brother, and, ironically, praising the honour of Selib, which she

affirmed was his sole motive for making a beggar's sister his wife. It were tedious to enumerate the insults and degrading insinuations of this ill-bred, ignorant woman; but for a length of time, my husband's unfortunate circumstances kept me silent, until repeated injuries rendered my wretched life intolerable. Loss of cheerfulness, of health, heretofore so excellent, seized my whole system, and presented strong indications of a rapid decline. Selib, now seriously alarmed, had too much penetration not to discern the real cause, and in a very few days after the discovery, removed me to a cottage, about a mile from Lisbon, where we lived most happily, until the clamours of our creditors presented a new species of misfortune, the most heart-rending of all others. We had received their property; were unable to pay, and though Selib would have cheerfully submitted to the rigours of the hardest labour, or the solitary gloom of a prison, if either of those terms

would satisfy their demands; but, alas! they would not; and in the latter he was speedily confined, without having the power even to pay for the few trifling indulgencies that are granted to wretched captives; leaving his miserable wife, and infant son, perishing for want of the necessaries of life, as a mouldy crust, and a little water, was the only food which the wretched Clarissa could procure for many days; but these privations gave me little pain, while my husband languished in the noisome, foul, and contagious air of a dungeon. It subdued my pride—my reluctance—and for my Selib's sake, I applied to Don Felix, who generously paid our debts, and gave me a few pistoles, accompanied with his earnest wish, that we would leave Portugal, and retire to some private village in Spain, where we might live in solitude, until the king's anger should be appeased, or, at least, until such time as he could do something effectual to serve us. Our finances were such as rendered our

compliance with this advice absolutely indispensable, and a very few days after Selib's liberation, we set out for a small village in Andelusia, where we determined to reside; but the malign shade of Don Acasto hovered round us, to whatever clime we wandered, and the long-wished-for time arrived, in which he hoped to find us friendless, helpless, and forsaken. Our deserted and pitiable situation, softened not his relentless bosom. We were an easy prey, he had long determined to make sure of; not one ray of compassion for our late sufferings, ever warmed his chill bosom; his domestics received their bloody mandate from the inhuman ruffian, and Selib fell beneath their murderous sabres. The scene of this horrible tragedy, was a lonely and sequestered vale, where Acasto's vile emissaries had a litter prepared, in which they conveyed me, with my infant, after a long and fatiguing journey, to the gloomy walls of the mansion in which I was born; but,

oh! how changed; it had been once the scene of happiness, but was then of every crime. The distracted state of my mind, precluded the possibility of my being able to recognize the country through which I was conveyed, and I had been many hours in the castle, before I had the slightest conception of the name or situation of it. My inquiries were answered by a kind old woman, named Margaret, the same that now attends you, who informed me, I was in the mansion of Belzo Carracci, the robber. This was the first moment I had heard of this extraordinary man, and my first sensations were those of disgust, abhorrence, and terror; to him I conceived myself indebted for the heaviest calamity of my life; but I was not long suffered to remain in ignorance, as the morning after my arrival Don Philip was sighing at my feet; the monster avowed himself the murderer of my Selib, and then pleaded ungovernable passion, in extenuation of the horrible deed. A

prisoner within the narrow confines of a chamber, I was obliged to listen, or, at least, hear the repetition of his detestable love; but his prayers, tears, threats, entreaties, or imprecations, served only to add hideousness to the horrible ruffian; every mental torture that it was possible to inflict, I was doomed to suffer; but, I trust heaven, not one thought even swerved from the rigid path of virtue. My sufferings were intolerable, and the invention of this fiend seemed on the rack; so persevering were his endeavours to conjure up new terrors, for the purpose of affrighting me into a compliance with his savage wishes. At length—oh! horrible recollection!—Acasto swore—dreadfully pledged himself, that my infant's life should pay the forfeit of my obstinacy, and gave me but one short day to decide on the dreadful alternative. I passed the hours of it in prayers and tears, and when the light of the following morning rendered objects visible, I shook like an aspen at the sound

of every footstep that echoed through the castle; but noon beheld my murderous gaoler in my chamber, armed with a dagger, and a countenance so horribly portentous, that I shrieked, on his entrance, with despair and terror. A few frantic strides brought him to my side, and in despite of my struggles, he forced my lovely infant from my arms; the innocent babe smiled on his assassin, and playfully grasped his curls. A momentary sensation of penitence seemed to soften the wretch, but an instant served to darken the gem of compassion which had brightened his visage; all the gloomy malignity of a diabolical imagination, added increasing terrors to his brow, as he again solemnly swore, my boy should be the immediate victim of his vengeance, unless I that moment consented to be his for ever. Monster, begone! I cried, with frenzied gesture, and harm not my babe, Heaven will save him from your grasp; but should Providence permit the perpetration of

such a crime, behold, I am armed!—the moment I see my child expire, the same shall witness this poignard sheathed in your bosom.” “A dagger!” he fiercely exclaimed, “Oh! cursed hour! say, woman, where didst thou procure that weapon?” On the floor of my chamber; behold it, has it not been an instrument of destruction? has it not been an abettor of your vile purposes? It may have committed murder, directed by your hand, but heaven has placed it now in mine, and has infused courage in a woman’s bosom, and given nerve to her arm, to rid the world of a savage. At least it will preserve my peace, and punish with death the cowardly wretch who would inhumanly annihilate helpless infancy.

“Acasto gazed a moment in silent wonder, and then placed my boy within my trembling arms; take him, he said, look, behold his smiles—consent to be mine, and he shall smile so still; if not, one short, one fleeting hour, shall see him yield his infant breath, in all the

torture of convulsive agony, and his last pangs, his last sighs, will reproach you with the obduracy that so cruelly sacrificed him. But why, he continued, should I lose a moment; swear this instant to be mine, or by all the terrors of unrelenting vengeance, the brat now dies. He drew his stiletto—I pressed my boy closer to my bosom—he grasped my arm—then raising his—in a hollow tone, said—“swear.” Oh! my God! I cried, do not forsake me in this moment of agony; of unutterable distress! “Swear,” vociferated Acasto; never, no, never! will I be voluntary criminal; villain begone. He cast a ghastly look of horrible malice, deadly expressive, and again raised his poignard. “One moment more,” he said, “gives thee to never-ending repentance—gives thy child to the tomb—say, murderess, shall I strike? The shades of evening already darken this chamber with gloomy shadows, so there’s no time to lose—speak—I

have trifled too long." "Pity me, oh, heaven!" I exclaimed. Oh, yes! said Acasto, in a voice of thunder, as he directed a deadly blow at my little darling—it fell—the point of his stiletto pierced my arm, and as he drew it forth, my blood sprinkled his dress. Again his hand was raised to strike, but a gigantic figure rushed between the dagger and my infant. Hold, murderer! said this awful visitor, in a hollow tone. Don Philip heard him not, as he was already stretched senseless on the floor. Follow me, said this dreadful figure. I obeyed, but with difficulty could keep within view; with such rapidity did he measure the great corridor which led to the apartment, where medicine and surgical instruments were deposited; on entering, he examined my wound, and dressed it; his hands trembled violently, and while thus kindly occupied, I beheld with wonder his colossal figure; but his face I could not distinguish through his visor, which was overshadowed by an

immense dark plume, that waved over his helmet ; his armour was covered with a cloak of dark crimson, in which he wrapped my infant son, and when he had dressed my arm, said, the wound was somewhat severe, but not dangerous. Praise heaven, your child has escaped unhurt ; and it shall now be my care to save him from future peril. He then rose to leave the chamber. Oh ! whither would you take my boy, I cried in despair ; perhaps, you too——. The eyes of the stranger shot the fire of displeasure, but pity instantly succeeded. “ Unfortunate mother ! I have not a moment to lose ; say your infant is dead, and that you have hid the body. Acasto will be here instantly ; but ere I depart, I solemnly swear to protect, to save, your child. You shall see me again to-morrow. Hark ! approaching footsteps—farewell—farewell.” I snatched a parting kiss from my lovely innocent, and the same instant this strange being vanished with

him through the pannelled walls of this very apartment.”

Alexena and Louisa, who had sat listening in horror, now crept closer to the unfortunate Clarissa, who continued:—

“ Scarce had the sliding wood shut him from my sight, before Acasto entered the chamber; his countenance was lividly pale; his voice was hollow; and he trembled violently. “ Where is the body?” he faltered, “ that I may remove it.”—Accursed fiend! I exclaimed, while tears of thankfulness and joy, at his escape, accompanied by convulsive sobs, almost deprived me of utterance; you sha’n’t have the body, I will embalm it with my tears, and then lay it in the grave, from whence his blood shall call for vengeance.

“ The wretch, misconceiving the cause of my tears, told me, concealment was useless, as putrefaction, in a very few days, must ensue, and lead to a discovery of the corpse. Those

expressions were intended to pierce my heart, and they had the desired effect. I screamed with terror, alarmed, lest his words should be prophetic, and my repeated shrieks, at length, drove him from the chamber. As soon as he retired, I threw myself on my knees, and petitioned for heaven's protection, for my infant; while the idea Acasto entertained of his death, considerably relieved my mind, and suggested the plan that I afterwards resolved to execute; which was, to assure Don Philip I had myself buried the body in the ruins of one of the fallen towers, that I might have the melancholy pleasure of weeping over the tomb of my murdered innocent. From the terror which Acasto had been unable to conceal, I felt convinced he was superstitious, as it was evident he had mistaken the knight for a spectre, and believed I was utterly ignorant of the appearance of this supposed phantom. Our next interview confirmed this idea, as the hypocrite solemnly protested it was not his inten-

tion to kill my child. "Elated with the hopes, said he, of making you mine, I pointed the dagger, in order to terrify you into compliance, and unfortunately stumbled at the moment, which caused your infant's death; being shocked at the fatal accident, the violence of my feelings overpowered me, and I sunk to the ground. He then earnestly requested I would discover the unfortunate babe, that he might have the body deposited in the cemetery of the castle, but, on my absolute refusal, he promised never again to mention the subject, and, in this instance, punctually adhered to his word, as for some weeks after this interview I was permitted to enjoy comparative tranquillity. The black knight regularly attended, with the pleasing information of my boy's welfare, for whom he had procured an excellent nurse, on whose fidelity he could rely, and removed them both to a place of safety. I was also assured of his protection, and entertained sanguine hopes of escape,

through his interference, if I could possibly avoid the advances of Don Philip for a very few months, as it was necessary my champion should interest the See of Rome in my behalf, and to the Pontiff he had resolved to go for the express purpose. Before he departed, I was informed of the particulars of the plan, and of the real name of my incognito, at which I was excessively surprised; but a few days after his departure, Acasto renewed his infamous suit, and numberless were the tortures which he inflicted; amongst others, he almost starved me into compliance, but Providence, assisted by his supernatural terrors, often saved me, in moments of the darkest prospect; the accidental falling of a picture, the sudden clashing of a door, or the mournful sound of the wind, has deterred him from a deed of infamy. But the moment arrived, in which I was to be sacrificed to his safety. A letter from some of his agents in Italy, reached the castle about two months

after the departure of the black knight ; and I remember the evening well. Don Philip was busily engaged with some papers, which he was examining with more than usual attention, while I sat in a recess of one of the windows, gazing in despair on the gloomy ramparts, when Torquo, that most pitiless of demons, entered, with the fatal packet, of which Acasto had read but a very few lines, ere his countenance became convulsed almost to blackness, and it was a considerable time before he could command articulation. The first use he made of his voice, was to order me to prepare for a journey to Saragossa, where, he intimated, it was his intention to send me the following day ; then desired Torquo to accompany him to his study : of their conference I could not form an idea, but regretted my sable warrior's absence, and that, be the intentions of Acasto ever so savage, I had no alternative, but submission. I passed that night in a variety of vain conjectures,

respecting the cause of this sudden and unaccountable determination; for where could he effect his purposes with greater secrecy than in Santa Marco: and it never occurred in course of this mental inquiry, whether Acasto was, or was not, to be the companion of my journey. Indeed, I had not an idea that he would even allow me to cross the court-yard unattended by himself; then judge my surprise on finding that Torquo was to be my sole attendant. I shudder, when I reflect on the impatience with which I awaited the approach of the following evening—of the hour on which the heartless Acasto doomed me to death. But I had not the most indistinct idea of his bloody purpose, and joyfully prepared, blessing the moment in which I was to quit the castle—a spot where I had passed the most miserable hours of my existence. On entering Don Philip's anti-chamber, he seemed greatly agitated, and when he bade me adieu, I was seized with a fatal presenti-

ment of approaching evil ; but my emotion was such as forbade reflection, and I hurried to the portal, where the inhuman Torquo impatiently awaited my approach. Acasto followed to the draw-bridge, and when quite nigh me, drew his cloak round his person, in order to conceal his features, which were so obscured by its shade, that I could neither distinguish, nor judge of their expression. His voice was hollow; but he spoke little, and as he placed a heavy purse in Torquo's hands, cautioned him to be steady, and let me want for nothing. " You have," said he, " received every necessary instruction. Now, Clarissa, farewell: and recollect that what has heretofore occurred, or may hereafter happen, of an unpleasant nature, has been solely occasioned by your unrelenting obstinacy ; but reproof, at this moment, would be as unavailing as cruel ; I therefore wish you safe, for your journey is likely to be a long one." " Am I not going to Saragossa?" said I.

“Yes, certainly,” was his reply, and again wishing me all happiness, until we should meet again, returned to the castle, while I mechanically followed Torquo across the draw-bridge, into a little wood, through which we hastened at a round pace, as he informed me we had many leagues to travel, before we could possibly reach the place at which he intended to put up for the night. The shades of evening were rapidly approaching; but their gloom was enlivened by the rising moon, which then began to glimmer, and cast her faint rays over the dark brows of the neighbouring rocks. It was almost twelve before Torquo thought of slackening his speed; but to proceed with the same velocity, became impossible, as, from the inequality of the ground, our animals were unsteady, and being weak with fatigue, stumbled every moment. I entreated my attendant to alight, which at first he was unwilling to do; but on my again representing the necessity of the measure, he complied, and led the

horse through the narrow defile in which we then were, into an extensive glen, apparently sunk in the bosom of the mountain. I gazed from the height on this yawning abyss, and with an emotion of extreme terror, demanded whether it was absolutely necessary we should pass through that savage wild. "Yes," replied Torquo, "but our journey, for the present, terminates at the opposite extremity, where you will find a place of rest, of which, I feel assured, you stand much in need." My thoughts now became confused; I feared—I could not tell what; but rode into the glen, close by his side, who, as a man, I naturally looked to for protection, and for the first moment of my life, I beheld him without being dismayed. He proceeded at a quicker pace than I wished, and in half an hour, we reached the opposite extremity of that wild, but only for the purpose of entering a still more terrific one. These horrible vales were connected by a narrow pass, apparently cut

out of the solid rock, where the road became so rugged, that it was impossible to sit the horses with safety; we, therefore, dismounted, and I walked forward a few paces, while Torquo was apparently employed in fastening their bridles, so as to enable him to lead them through the glen. On observing what he was about, I slowly advanced through the narrow defile, and gained the open plain, where I beheld the rising moon, in all her glorious splendour. I stood to gaze on the bright and welcome luminary, and my thoughts naturally wandered to the heaven, in which it moved. With fervency, I besought Almighty protection; but short space was allowed for my prayers: a quick approaching footstep alarmed me, and on turning to ascertain the cause, beheld Torquo, without the horses. A horrid conviction of his murderous intent, flashed across my affrighted imagination, and it was with much difficulty I could summon courage to demand where our

animals were. He hesitated for a moment, then said, "We no longer want them, lady; our journey is nigh finished. A few paces farther, at the next turning on the road, you will see the house prepared for your reception." "I breathed again, and hastened forward, that I might see it, as I could not help fearing my uncouth attendant, who I wished to be rid of, as with him my fears of death would vanish. The rock that excluded the view of that home to which I was conducted, lay within a few paces of us, and as I touched its brown sides in passing, I peevishly exclaimed, "What! is there to be no end to this pile of crags?" "Oh! yes," replied Torquo, "a little farther, and you will have an extensive prospect of a most delightful country." I quickened my pace; but guess my despair, on turning round its projecting base, when, instead of an hospitable hearth, I beheld a barren and desolate plain, of great extent. My eyes were strained in vain endeavours to catch

the form of a human dwelling, in the hazy mists of distance; but my scrutinizing search was fruitless, and in accents of despair and poignant distress, I turned to Torquo, demanding the home to which he had promised to conduct me. He paused—seized me by the arm—then, with a ghastly look of murderous exultation, pointed to the earth, which had been freshly turned up, and presented to my affrighted senses—to my agonized soul—a grave, newly dug, at the foot of a rock. “This is the home—the couch—the mansion of repose—to which I have solemnly sworn to Acasto, to lead—and bury you and your griefs for ever.” “Oh, heaven!” I exclaimed, “forsake me not, or I am, indeed, lost! Oh! my child, my darling child, intercede for your mother. Alas! are we to be thus, thus cruelly separated?” “By no means,” observed Torquo, “you will be with him presently; therefore, pray speedily, as there is no time to lose.” I fell at the feet of the assassin, and pleaded

for life ; so true it is, that be our miseries what they may, we are unwilling to part with it. I promised to change my name, to retire to whatever distant clime he might command, and bind myself by a solemn oath, never to reveal the secrets of that night—my birth—my name—or my misfortunes. But his impatience to perpetrate his bloody deed, scarce allowed me time to make those promises. “All stuff and madness, lady,” grumbled Torquo, “you must die!” then dragged me to the mouth of that tomb, which gaped to receive its destined prey. I frantically beheld the narrow spot which was to receive me—and my fears. The moon-beams fell faintly on the cold clay, and instant death, with all its concomitant horrors, chilled my heart ; a sickly scream announced my fast-fleeting strength ; while the villain endeavoured to bind me, and stifle my cries, by placing his hand tight on my mouth. But what could he fear? what could render such caution necessary in such solitary wilds?

Yet he had fears, and not without reason, for the bands of Belzo Carracci wandered through those deserts, hunting in concert with beasts of prey; tho' who among them so savage as Torquo. He had forced me on my knees—then pausing a moment—raised his glittering stiletto—the light of the moon added brightness to its terrors; and as it trembled in his grasp, annihilated hope; the motion of my feet, in vain endeavours to rise, threw some of the loose earth, which had been hardened by the frosty air, into the grave, and it rattled in hollow sounds, similar to those formed by clay thrown on a coffin. I shuddered, and conceiving it my death-knell, once more turned my streaming eyes on my intended murderer, who seemed to hesitate; conceiving this a favourable omen, I again pleaded for life, with the energy which fear, in such moments, always inspires. But at that terrible and trying instant, the sound of voices came sighing on the breeze, accompanied by the

distant echo of horses' feet, which were easily distinguished advancing. Again the inhuman Torquo raised his murderous arm: hope and fear induced me to scream, as assistance was evidently nigh; while my executioner, startled and alarmed at the piercing wildness of my shrieks, with an execration, buried his poignard in my side—threw my motionless body into the grave—and fled; but to heap the earth on me was not in his power, as the horsemen were within a few paces, and would have massacred him had he remained a moment longer. When I awakened out of insensibility, occasioned by my wound, imagine my surprise, on finding myself in bed, in a comfortable, though vaulted chamber, attended by the black knight and a peasant girl. The visor of the former was down as usual, but I conceived his face was wasted by long sickness, and his emaciated form confirmed my conjectures. As soon as I had power to articulate, I demanded where I was? and under whose protection? “You

are safe, and under mine, said this extraordinary being, but you must not speak, until such time as your perfect restoration permits; your wound has a very favourable appearance, and a good sister from a neighbouring convent, who constantly attends you, will be here presently to dress it, and now that you are sensible of your situation, I trust you will aid our exertions for your recovery, by taking those medicines that are prescribed for you, and by strictly attending to Father Zelo's advice." He then, in accents of the fondest solicitude, wished me a speedy recovery, enjoined silence, and withdrew."

Here Clarissa was interrupted by the visible agitation of Alexena, which alarmed both her and Louisa. On inquiring the cause, our heroine tremulously demanded, what sort of man Father Zelo was? This question surprised Clarissa, who entered into a description of his person, and which satisfied the former, that he was the

identical priest who Anselmo had procured to marry her and Lord Mortimer. But unwilling to interrupt Clarissa, she promised her an explanation at some other period, who then proceeded thus:

“ The moment I found myself unrestrained by any other than my female attendant, I begged to know how long I had been confined in that apartment, and when I was brought to it; to which she replied, I had been there a month, and that the black knight had watched by me during that time with unceasing kindness and attention, but could not inform me where I was, as she had been led there blindfolded by Father Zelo, who never suffered her to wander more than a very few paces from my apartment. It is useless to enter into a detail of all those circumstances which occurred during the period of my confinement. Let it suffice, I had the rapturous joy of again folding my infant to my bosom, and that I was treated with all imaginable care and tenderness, by the kind father

and the black knight, to whose unremitting care I owe my life. In less than three months, I made an astonishing recovery ; for though the wound had not been dangerous, yet the fever brought on by the agitation of my spirits, reduced me to the last extremity, and had it not been for the skill and unremitting attention with which I had been treated, it is a moral impossibility I could have survived. At length, when able to leave my chamber, I became anxious to retire into a convent, until such time as I could acquaint Don Felix with my melancholy situation, who, I had no doubt, would provide for my child, and enable me to take the veil. On my next interview with the black knight, I explained my intentions, and requested his advice. He listened attentively, then, with a smile, said, " Have you already forgiven Torquo. From your ravings, when delirious, I am inclined to believe you are indebted to that old ruffian for your wound and

late illness; you may, therefore, rest assured, I will not lose the benefit of such an excellent witness; one, whose single testimony is sufficient to bring the assassin to that punishment, which it would be an insult to justice to let him evade. Here you have nothing to fear, and am certain you will be astonished when informed, that you are, at this moment, in the subterranean dungeons of Santa Marco." I became almost motionless at this terrible information, which gave the black knight much uneasiness, and, in the kindest accents of pity, he assured me, I had nothing to fear. "Acasto," said he, "has gone to Lisbon, and it is likely will never return; I will, therefore, in the course of to-morrow, conduct you through the secret passes of those caverns, with the secrets of which, it is absolutely necessary you should be acquainted, and introduce you into the castle, where you are to reside, until such time as I can remove you to a convent, or some more agreeable residence." The fol-

lowing morning, he led me through the most terrible intricacies that, I believe, were ever formed, and with the secrets of which I was before unacquainted. Amongst others, he taught me the nature of the spring in the pannel of this apartment, which I am permitted to explain, and also to inform you of the name of my friend, in order that, by your knowledge of the first, you may secure an impenetrable retreat, if necessary, but to which you are not to resort on any trivial occasion—only in cases of dire necessity, should such occur; and with the second, that his name may inspire confidence, and banish ridiculous terror, should you see the hero himself; yet it is necessary to observe, your life will pay the forfeit of your indiscretion, if you ever, without permission, reveal the name I am about to confide to your keeping; but, to terminate your suspense, know that the black knight and Belzo Carracci are the same person. Yes; that formidable robber, the terror of this

country, is that man—the best—and “bravest of the brave.” With his history, or the former incidents of his life, I am unacquainted; but I have seen his horrible troop, and know him to be their leader. Last night, they brought prisoners to their cavern, who, I understand, are persons of distinction, with whom Carracci is acquainted; yet, as he has, from some unaccountable motive, sworn to protect you, you have now little to fear from Acasto; for the oath of that bandit has never been violated. However, be watchful, as he may be absent at the moment when his aid would be most wanting. Recollect, I fell beneath Torquo’s dagger, owing to a similar circumstance; but I am inclined to believe Carracci is more watchful of your safety, as he has informed me of every circumstance of your life, since your arrival from England, and expresses the utmost interest in your welfare. Now, farewell; as I see the dawn bursts through the eastern sky, and it is time to retire;

though I shall, with your permission, visit you as often as is consistent with safety and prudence; yet, ere I go, let me caution you to have special care how you wander through the deserted chambers of this castle, lest you may be lost in their mazes; and should you, at any time, encounter strange figures, carefully avoid them; for when Carracci conceives it necessary to introduce himself, he will do so in a proper manner, and however odd this advice may appear, you will, perchance, find it valuable and worthy your attention."

Clarissa now rose to retire, but Alexena would not permit her, until she partook of some refreshment, after the fatigues of the night; then thanked her, in the most graceful manner, for her advice, kindness, and the gratification she had conferred, in the recital of her eventful story.

Before she retired, Louisa ventured to inquire how she became acquainted with Margaret's mentioning her name to them.

“ I was behind that pannel,” said Clarissa, pointing to it, “ where curiosity led me to seek the captives of Acasto, who Carracci had represented in such glowing terms, that, believe me when I say, you excited no small degree of interest. It was there I overheard Margaret repeat the tale which Don Philip has impressed on the minds of his domestics.”

Alexena now mentioned the form she had seen, and which had been the real cause of her weakness ; at which Clarissa seemed surprised, and after a thoughtful pause, said, “ It must be Carracci himself, whose curiosity has also prompted him to have a peep at your *ladyship* ; yet I am inclined to believe he did not wish to be seen, though it is probable, he wished to see you, lest such knowledge might become absolutely necessary, when it would not be in his power to attain it.”

Clarissa then pressed the spring of the pannel, which was concealed in the carved wood, and in the secret of

which she initiated Alexena. When touched, it flew open, and discovered a long narrow passage, contrived in the wall, at the farther end of which a lamp was burning. Observing the surprise of her new friends, she informed them, it was placed there by Carracci, who, doubtless, waited to conduct her in safety to those apartments appropriated to her use. Our heroine smiled at the mention of so much attention, which did not pass unobserved by Clarissa, who, with smile answering smile, said, "It is necessary to the safety of Carracci and his troop, that he should be thus particular, lest I should stray and fall into some unforeseen danger which might prove fatal.— Believe me, Del Harco is not obliterated from my memory, and you cannot forget who my friend is. I owe him, it is true, a vast debt of gratitude ; but nothing more."

Alexena became alarmed, lest she had unintentionally hurt the feelings

of her friend, and timidly entreated forgiveness. "Oh, my dearest love!" said Clarissa, "was I so captious, I should be unworthy your favour. I merely made those observations, lest, by your entertaining such ideas, I might lose that place in your esteem, which I value so highly;" then affectionately saluted both her and Louisa, and was about to enter the passage, when a gigantic figure appeared at the farther extremity, beckoning her to hasten, whose dark plume and glittering helmet announced Carracci.

"Is it him," said Alexena, in a low faint voice. "Yes," replied Clarissa, in a still lower tone, as she darted through the aperture, which shut with amazing rapidity after her.

Louisa gazed at the spot where she had stood, lost in amaze and wonder, until reminded by Alexena, that she was unable to sit longer. The former then apologized for her inconsiderate thoughtlessness, and they hastened to

their beds, where, in a few moments, their cares were buried in profound and tranquil sleep.



CHAP. IX.

“ ——— When we in our viciousness grow hard,
 ——— the wise gods seal our eyes;
 In our own filth drop our clear judgments; make us
 Adore our errors; laugh at's, while we strut
 To our confusion.”

ANT. & CLEO.

IT was noon ere our heroine or Louisa awoke, and then, from the darkness of the morning, occasioned by heavy rain, they had no conception it was so late. The shutters of the windows remained closed, and they, therefore, lay conversing on the extraordinary events of the last night, which seemed a fantasy of the brain; but was, nevertheless, a certainty not to be doubted.

“ It is too true,” said Louisa, “ that we are in one of the chambers of Santa Marco; the actual prisoners of the vilest of human beings; yet a gleam

of light bursts through the darkness, and encourages hope, for—are we not protected by heaven and Carracci?”

“ Yes, I trust, we are,” Alexena replied, “ and though I fear that man, I feel I must respect him ; his power is great, and we have proof, that in one instance, at least, he has not abused it ; we are assured of his best wishes, and are we not desired to rely on his exertions when a favourable moment offers ? Clarissa says we are, and may Providence grant it speedily ; but at all events, while allowed to remain together, I shall fear nothing from Acasto ; for the instant he decides on any thing personally offensive, I fear we will be separated, and then to what trials may we not be doomed. For who can save us from the power of such wretches as Don Philip, his confessor, and steward ?—none, except that Being who gave us life ; therefore, let him be always in our thoughts ; let us call on him, and he will not forsake us in the hour of distress ; no sickness or casualty

can impede his will, and we should recollect his late merciful interference in favour of Clarissa; his omnipotence directed the stiletto—mocked the assassin's aim—defeated his bloody purpose—saved the intended victim from an untimely grave—and, likely, will restore her to joys which will more than compensate for all her late grievous trials. Therefore, let us bear our misfortunes with fortitude, with patience, with Christian resignation, bowing humbly to the Divine Will, and we may calculate with certainty, on being rewarded, if not in this world, surely in the next. Yes, let us imitate Clarissa, and, if necessary, like her, struggle for the preservation of our innocence, to the last moment of expiring nature. We may be rendered miserable by the villany of others, but it rests with ourselves to be guilty or not. Let nothing ever tempt us to do that by which we shall forfeit our own esteem, and we will insure the good opinion of the world. The wicked prevail for a given period, but it is only

to accomplish the wise purposes of the Most High, who generally dooms them to be their own executioners; punishment eventually awaits their misdeeds, and the longer they delay, the more accumulated the force with which it falls—the more terrible the destruction by which they are crushed.”

At this moment Margaret entered their chamber, and represented the lateness of the hour. “Don Philip has breakfasted,” said she, “and gone out on the ramparts, accompanied by his chaplain; therefore, Donna Alexena, if you please, you can have the morning’s repast in your anti-chamber, or in the parlour, before he returns, should his presence be disagreeable. My lord, however, is in good humour this morning, nay, I do not remember when I have seen him so much so; he would not allow you to be disturbed to-day, as he wishes you to appear particularly charming this afternoon.”

“For what reason?” said Alexena, whose colour at the moment vied with the lily.

“I understand,” replied Margaret, “there are to be strangers here, in consequence of some curious discovery Don Philip has made.”

“Of what nature?” demanded Louisa.

“I know not,” rejoined Margaret, “but suppose it is something that will lead to mischief, from father Montano’s looks, which have been unusually expressive of malice since morning.”

Alexena wished to change the subject, as it was extremely painful, from apprehensions which tormented her, respecting Carracci and Clarissa, the latter of whom she feared had been traced to their apartment. However, firmly resolved not to give Margaret cause for suspicion, she carelessly demanded, were there any musical instruments in the castle?”

“Oh, yes! Donna, there are; and drawing materials in the library, besides a vast number of books of all languages; please, allow me, when you have finished dressing, and I will conduct you to it.”

Alexena thanked her, but observed,

she conceived it necessary first to obtain Don Acasto's permission.

"Shall I go ask him?" said Margaret, anxiously.

"No, by no means, I shall mention it after dinner, and to-morrow will visit it, if I am not denied that pleasure."

"Well, my dear lady, just as you please; but I would feel so happy in having it in my power to contribute to your amusement or comfort, that was he to look ever so terrible, I would ask him for your sake."

Margaret now retired to serve breakfast, and the moment the door closed after her, Louisa observed, she would give much to know the subject of conversation between Acasto and the monk. "I fear we are connected with it, and that such knowledge would excite a painful degree of interest; for what could detain them on the ramparts so very long, except devising mischief against us poor creatures."

"I sincerely trust you are mistaken," replied our heroine, with a smile, "but

should they be employed as you suppose, 'tis likely they may fall the victims of their own villany in the interim ; however, it is for us to watch with vigilance their every word, look, and action, that, if possible, we may be prepared to counteract or avoid them ; and would it not be prudent to examine all the adjoining apartments, that in case of necessity, we may be competent to ascertain the situation of each, even in darkness ?”

“ I agree with you,” said Louisa, “ and let our second scrutiny commence at the top of the great staircase, that being the central point from which the galleries and corridors lead to the different suits of apartments.”

They shortly after left their chamber, and on reaching a great arched window, which commanded a view of the draw-bridge ; they were surprised to find it lowered, and a number of men, advancing from the adjacent wood, who, Acasto was waiting to conduct into the court-yard.

“Who can these be?” inquired Alexena, “Am I to suppose they are people who Acasto has employed to guard the castle, in consequence of Torquo’s information? yet, if he believes Carracci is in the vicinity, why are they not armed? but it is unnecessary, as there are weapons in the armoury here sufficient for twice the number.”

The strangers were now fast assembling in the hall below, which rendered it unsafe for our heroine to remain longer, and as she was about to retire, beheld Acasto and his monkish shadow approach from the portcullis, the draw-bridge having resumed its wonted station. In a few moments after they reached their apartment, Montano attended in their anti-chamber, and in the most unhandsome manner, demanded admission. Louisa, alarmed and enraged at his insolence, attended to prevent farther violence, as he knocked with such roughness at the door, that it threatened to go to pieces, without any apology for his rudeness; he said

“it was Don Acasto’s pleasure that Donna Alexena should attend him instantly in the saloon, where he wished to inform her of the extent of those apartments chosen for her pleasure or amusement, and to prohibit all others.”

Louisa observed, “she could not say whether Donna Alexena would attend Acasto exactly then; but, she continued, “’tis likely, to-morrow or next day, he may be honoured with half-an-hour’s attention; yet, even for the certainty of this, I cannot promise.”

Montano was almost convulsed with rage, and with a look of ineffable scorn, vociferated, “Begone, insolent girl! and tell your proud mistress, that Don Philip commands her presence, and should you ever presume to use such impertinence hereafter, know I have the power to punish—to effectually curb—your imperious, audacious insolence.”

“Wretched minion!” retorted the passionate Louisa, “I despise your threats—your vengeance; and ere you go, allow me to prophesy that disgrace

awaits, at no very distant period, to compensate your exertions. And now, do you begone, and tell your vile employer, that *my mistress* will not attend his summons. Away! I say, lest *your master* may be induced to punish your insolent intrusion, and outrageous conduct, within those chambers.”

She then bounded into the inner apartment, and bolted the door, before the monk could recover presence of mind sufficient to impede her intention, and finding his endeavours to force the door ineffectual, retired, muttering dreadful imprecations, which were distinguishable as he passed along the gallery.

Alexena was terrified for the result of her friend's rashness, and dreading the resentment of Don Philip, sat almost an hour, completely motionless through fear, and when her powers of reflection were restored, she teased herself with conjectures, how she should appease Acasto's wrath, without degrading her friend, or being contemptible in her

own estimation. Her innocent heart pointed out the jewels which Don Philip had sent;—"if I wear them," she mentally said, "our tyrant may take it as condescension; if so, it will appease his wrath, though I certainly shall never use them again." Without further consideration she began her toilet, and dressed with more than usual care. Her agitation heightened her complexion, and when the dinner bell summoned her, she looked exquisitely lovely, but descended to the drawing-room with a palpitating heart. Not so Louisa, she had determined to represent the intrusion of Montano into their apartments, as an unpardonable insult, and call on Acasto to reprimand him for it.

With these different ideas they entered the saloon, where they found Acasto lolling on a sofa, who took no notice of them, and though Alexena felt the insult, she remained silent; but not so Louisa, who, being enraged on our heroine's account, said, "I will

order dinner in our apartments, as Don Acasto is absent; yet is it not strange that the ruffian monk affirmed he waited here; however, we are fortunate in being rid of him, for who would desire the company of a man who is ignorant of the respect due to our sex." "Signiora Louisa forgets she is my slave," said Acasto, grinning ironically, as he raised himself on his elbow "but as I have no further occasion for her service, I will shew my gratitude for the past, by granting her freedom; therefore, let her prepare, for before this hour tomorrow, she shall be on the road to Madrid."

"Yes, on the same road you sent a lady under the care of Torquo, but beware lest Belzo Carracci intercept your attendants." Louisa paused, she found she had said too much, as Don Philip's countenance changed from red to pale, from pale to livid blackness; in a moment he sprung from the lounge, and seizing her by the arm, said, "so, so, Signiora, you have been

listening—an honourable lady-like amusement; I suppose this was the cause of your drowsiness this morning; has Donna Alexena been also as elegantly employed?—ah! I am right in my conjectures—very well—mighty well; however, I shall take special care your curiosity shall, in future, have little chance to be gratified. Believe me, the scale on which you are to move, will be very confined; eh! what think you of one of the subterranean cells?” He now shook her violently, and with an horrid oath affirmed, had he proof she was guilty to the extent of his suspicions, he would consign her to a death of instant torments. Alexena now interfered, and assured Acasto, that Louisa’s words were merely the ebullitions of a hasty temper, and that she was sorry an innocent tale of Margaret’s should be the origin of so much uneasiness.

“The old woman” she continued, “mentioned a sad circumstance of your sister’s having been carried off by a captain of banditti, who had inha-

manly wounded her, and Louisa felt hurt that you should threaten to expose her to the same danger for so trifling an offence as a few inconsiderate words."

Here Alexena blushed deeply, she had never conversed with Acasto before — never spoke to him, except in monosyllables, and she was then obliged to prevaricate to save her cousin's life. Acasto in a moment forgot his anger, and, mentally, cursed his folly for using such language before the woman he adored; and in order to remove the unpleasant impression from her mind, promised to prevent a repetition of Montano's visits, though he really had no such intention.

That barbarian was awaiting their entrance in savage gloominess, nursing a large portion of gall and passion, which he intended to torture those unfortunate females with during the evening, as he was miserable when any living being enjoyed tranquillity, even for a moment, where he had the means to prevent it, and they, therefore, shrunk

from his brutal scrutiny, but not until their pallid looks discovered all he wished to know, as their agitation plainly told their interview with Acasto was of a most unpleasant nature.

The desert was scarce served, ere Montano significantly asked Alexena had she been in the library or music room; she was unwilling to enter into conversation with her old enemy, as it was particularly disagreeable, but he adroitly placed her unwillingness to another account, and with a sneer said, "was I the friend of Donna Alexena, I would commend more suitable amusements, than those of meanly prying into the secrets of a family, or endeavouring to seduce a doating old woman to assist in the brainless project of escape." Louisa started at those assertions, and Alexena seemed thunderstruck, while their wary persecutor continued, "yes, yes! your evident confusion confirms your guilt; say was it not mean, detestably mean, to offer a bribe to a servant: denial is vain, for

in consequence of a sort of confession which I had from the talkative idiot, I find you were anxious to obtain an accurate knowledge of all the private apartments of the castle, in order, should opportunity offer, to admit that English adventurer Mortimer, who is now loitering in this neighbourhood; but should our domestics be so fortunate as to capture him, he shall be hanged from the draw-bridge, as an example to all such impostors."

The latter part of this information was lost on the person for whom it was intended, as she had fainted from the shock which sudden joy had inflicted; joy that her lover—her lord—her affianced husband, was in the vicinity of the castle; oh! it was an excess of happiness that her agitated mind and delicate nerves were unequal to; and had the effect of reducing her to a state of insensibility before the last savage expressions of the monk could possibly inflict the pain which he intended.

Acasto darted an angry look at his

chaplain, as he hastened to support our fainting heroine, and on her recovery summoned Margaret to assist Louisa in bearing her to her chamber; but she was unwilling to retire, until she should ascertain the truth of Montano's late assertion. Having drank a glass of water, she declared herself much better, and expressed a wish to remain a few moments; "I cannot," she observed, "leave this room, until I assure Don Acasto that I am not guilty; I respect myself too much to allow any inducement to tempt me to corrupt the fidelity of a servant, was that servant corruptible, which I sincerely trust is not Margaret's case; however, had I made such an attempt, I should not reproach myself, when I reflect that I am confined here contrary to religion, to the laws of my country, and to my own will; but as to that good woman, when she offered to conduct me to the library, I declined the pleasure, until I should first obtain Don Philip's permission; and here is Margaret present, let

her speak, should my veracity be questioned."

Montano instantly exclaimed, "veracity!—speak, old dotard!—tell the truth quickly."

"I have little to say," replied Margaret, as she devoutly crossed herself; "what Donna Alexena has related, is no more than the truth, and as to making confessions, God forbid I should make any to you, had I any to make."

This irritated the monk not a little, who fiercely demanded, had she not informed him, that Lady Alexena was acquainted with Lord Mortimer's arrival in the neighbourhood, and the means by which Don Acasto had discovered that event? namely, by finding his lordship's baggage in the inn at the foot of the neighbouring hill; again Margaret made the holy sign, which so enraged Montano, that had not Acasto been present, he would have flung his glass at her head; and in a voice of thunder, ordered her from the room;—"begone, you old hypocrite! and

no more of your mummery ; had I the power, I should incapacitate you from babbling, by cutting the tongue from your head."

Acasto was now also enraged, but from a different motive. His chaplain's indiscretion was the cause : for had he not informed Alexena of her lover's arrival, thereby holding out strong hopes of escape ; he also felt assured Margaret had not made the discovery, though he knew she had heard that some friend of our heroine's had reached the inn on the mountain ; but on reflecting that Lord Mortimer had fallen into the hands of Belzo Carracci, and his banditti, his anger subsided, as he made no doubt, that his rival was, in a very few minutes after, a lifeless corpse ; and wishing to crush Alexena's hopes at once, he observed, that Margaret's imprudent communication gave him little uneasiness, as a fortunate circumstance saved him the disagreeable task of punishing the intruder. A few days since, he was captured by Belzo

Carracci, that merciless robber, and, doubtless, has long since paid the forfeit of his life, as atonement for the blind temerity which induced him to wander into those solitary wilds, without sufficient force to protect him against the outrages of that blood-thirsty bandit, who universally sacrifices his luckless captives to the safety of his abandoned crew.

Alexena listened in raptures to this detail, which Acasto hoped would have had a contrary effect, and the emotions produced by excessive joy, were so violent, that Don Philip would have been quite blind, had he not observed them. Indeed, from the commencement of the conversation, he had narrowly marked the expression of her countenance; and to his infinite surprise, discerned more pleasure than pain in it. His observations were succeeded by sensations of delight, and he became infatuated by the idea, that Alexena was rejoiced at the destruction of her late lover. “ Lord Mortimer

has had some strange tie on her gratitude," he mentally exclaimed, "which his death has happily removed, and leaves her uncontrouled mistress of her wishes. May it not be, that she already looks on my passion with a favourable eye? It must be so. Oh! woman! woman! most undefinable of creatures, that can be thus won by cruelty!" His imagination presented visions of the most delightful description, which he fondly encouraged; and when he rose to attend **Alexena** to the door, her gaiety, and the harmony of her features, were

" Confirmations strong——
As proofs of holy writ,"

that she returned his passion, and would shortly make him the happiest of the happy.

When the footsteps of **Alexena** were no longer distinguishable, **Acasto** returned to the table, and filling up a massy cup for himself, and another for

his chaplain, he drank to the prospect of his speedy marriage, and was heartily pledged by his *worthy* chaplain. Glass succeeded glass—Don Philip then had an inexhaustible theme. They soon became inebriated, and were shortly carried to their rooms, in brutal insensibility.



CHAP. X.

“ It gives me wonder great as my content,
To see you here before me. O my soul’s joy!
* * * * *

————— If I were now to die,
’Twere to be most happy; for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute,
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate.”

OTHELLO.

ON Alexena’s return to her apartment, she embraced Louisa, and then sunk, sobbing, on her bosom. “ Oh ! my dear friend,” she murmured, “ those are tears of joy, which I must indulge; they are strangers, and are twice

welcome from the cause. They flow from the observations I have made on Acasto's manner, who really imagines Mortimer is dead, which gives me double assurance of his safety. Is it—can it—be possible he is with Carracci?"

"I sincerely hope he is," said Louisa, "but what proof have we that he has been in those mountains? May not all this be a fabrication, to try what effect such information would have on your feelings." Alexena admitted the justice of this observation, which, in the plenitude of her joy, she had overlooked, and now became distressed, at the idea of having entertained, what, on consideration, appeared little more credible than an idle dream

As it was almost dark, Louisa rose to procure lighted candles, and found on the dressing-table, a billet, which she was about to destroy, when the light of the fire discovered the address, which proved it was intended for Alexena, and on examination, found it sealed. Much

astonished, she hastily lit a lamp, with a flaming brand, and then presented the note to Alexena, who hastily read these words:—

“ Lady Alexena—I have much pleasure in being able to say, that Lord Mortimer is safe under my protection, and anxiously entreats an interview with you this night in the castle chapel. Should you grant this request, which I trust you will; secure the door of your apartment, and when the clock strikes twelve, fearlessly enter the passage by the sliding pannel; a friend will await your approach, and conduct you in safety.

B. C.”

It is scarce possible to describe the sensations produced by the perusal of this note. Alexena pressed it to her lips in ecstasy, forgetting by whom it was written, though the signature declared it the writing of Belzo Carracci; but that very circumstance enhanced its value, as it removed all doubt, and

on advising together, Louisa was of opinion, that our heroine should venture to the chapel. "I make no doubt," she said, "but it is Clarissa that is delegated to conduct us; therefore, what have we to fear? For my part, I should not shrink, if I beheld the dread Carracci himself." Alexena started at the name, as she never heard it without emotions, which were to herself undefinable, and notwithstanding all she had heard of his goodness, the tales of Margaret, and dark hints of Acasto, left a strong impression of fear, which was increased by his mysterious knowledge of all the secret passages in the castle. However, she resolved to risk every thing, and see her matchless lover.

"There is not another so true on earth," she mentally said. "What has he not already suffered for my sake? Has he not encountered the greatest hardships, the most cruel privations; followed me from clime to clime, from kingdom to kingdom; over stormy

seas ; through desarts, into dungeons ; ventured life, fame, fortune, country, friends, every thing—rescuing me from oppression's grasp, and more than once from the jaws of death ? and has he not now confided his life to the keeping of a robber, terrible from his crimes, and for what ?—Urged by the enchanting hope of saving me from a degrading slavery, worse, a thousand times worse than death. Oh, Mortimer ! you love me with unbounded confidence ; take my heart in return, it is all I have to give ; but should heaven smile, and one day unite us, every moment of my life shall be devoted to your happiness." Alexena now blushed deeply at the idea that her unexpressed thoughts conveyed. She found she loved his lordship with her whole soul, and would willingly resign her life to ensure him felicity. Was there any thing indelicate in meeting him in the castle chapel ? Certainly not ! as both Clarissa and Louisa were to be witnesses ; and when every thing was ar-

ranged, with a palpitating heart, she waited the sullen signal from the clock, anxiously counting the minutes of dilatory time, and calculating the number that must necessarily intervene ere she again beheld her Mortimer.

Margaret shortly after entered with chocolate, and apologized for the uneasiness her idle talk had occasioned, and mentioned that Montano endeavoured to induce her to accuse Louisa of an attempt to subvert her fidelity, by a bribe; "but I firmly refused," continued Margaret, and he then threatened to have me confined in the dungeons; however, he is quiet for the remainder of the night, as both he and Don Philip have been carried to bed in a state of drunken insensibility, though it is not yet eleven o'clock."

This was welcome news, as it prevented any uneasiness arising from fear of intrusion or discovery by those wretches; and as the hour glided on, Louisa became wearied by Margaret's loquacity, and dismissed her under

pretence of being troubled with a headache. When she had passed the anti-chamber, Alexena assisted in securing their door, which they did effectually. Louisa then trimmed their lamp, and, at length, the great clock, in slow and solemn sounds, tolled twelve. Our heroine was greatly agitated; she listened attentively—counted the lengthened strokes—asked if there was a possibility of miscalculating the time—cast a scrutinizing glance round the dark outline of the chamber—was by Louisa's side the next instant, who pressed the spring with a firm hand; the yielding pannel retired, and the same moment the passage received our fair adventurers, who glided along, in trembling haste, to the first turning, where the kind Clarissa waited. After saluting, she requested to know had they closed the pannel, and was surprised on being answered in the negative; she therefore hastened to secure it, and then shewed the action of the

spring, with the means by which it was impelled back or forward. On touching the movement in the wall, which was in its nature extremely simple, the pannel flew into its place with amazing rapidity, and the ladies now instructed in the use of this valuable secret, were led by Clarissa through the passage, down a flight of narrow steps, into another passage much narrower than the former, and which seemed constructed in the wall; this led to the armoury, and into it they were also admitted by a moving pannel, where Alexena became terrified on seeing the rusty old suits of mail, long since neglected, but which her imagination animated with the spirits of their former owners, and she trembled so violently, that Louisa could scarce support her. They hastened through this apartment, and entered a very spacious chamber, decorated with the likenesses of all the Santa Marco family; and as the ladies passed rapidly through the centre of

the room, the eyes of each figure seemed to inquire the cause of their intrusion, or where they were rambling at such a chill and solitary hour. Having reached the library, they tripped along with light and cautious steps, as Clarissa informed them, they were then directly over Acasto's apartment; from the library they entered the music room, out of which they quickly passed into a gallery, and it terminated in a corridor that led to the great stairs; these they hastily descended, and arrived undiscovered, and in safety, in the hall.

Clarissa now shaded the lamp, as they were close to the servant's apartments, and it also became necessary to observe strict silence. From the hall they entered a small low chamber; this communicated with the stone passage, that led to the tower, in which Alexena had overheard the conversation between Don Philip and Torquo. Here Clarissa paused, and drew forth

a key, by whose assistance they were admitted into a new range of extensive chambers, formerly occupied by the troops who defended the castle; beyond these there was a passage of considerable length, which terminated in a narrow flight of stone steps, that led to a vaulted passage, and at its extremity there were two ponderous folding-doors, which seemed to impede farther progress; but on Clarissa's knocking gently, they were instantly opened, and they entered the chapel. The lamp she carried, cast a faint glimmering light round the long dark aisles, and discovered the receding figure of a man, whose nodding plumes swept the low jutting cornices, as he retreated under the gallery.

Alexena said, "That must be Carracci, but where is Lord Mortimer?"

"He will be with you presently," replied Clarissa, "if you conceive you have fortitude sufficient to support an interview."

“Oh! yes, yes,” exclaimed our heroine, “I am all impatience.”

Louisa smiled. Clarissa nodded significantly, which covered Alexena's face with blushes; she had involuntarily betrayed a secret, by the violence of her feelings, but of which she had no cause to be ashamed. They had then approached the altar, where Clarissa said, Belzo had ordered her to remain until Lord Mortimer's arrival. “Let us stand close to the holy sanctuary,” she whispered, “and pray for Heaven's protection, as we cannot employ our time better, until the moment of your lord's approach.”

In a few minutes the organ sent forth one sad and melancholy note, the lengthened sound of which almost froze the blood in the veins of Alexena and her cousin, who then turned their eyes in horror on Clarissa, expecting every moment she would assume some frightful shape, as at that instant, they believed her a spirit, who was permitted to lead them there, in order to disclose

some terrible and bloody crime, which Acasto had committed; and conjectured the figure which they conceived to be that of Carracci, was no other than that of her murdered husband Selib. A moment's reflection, however, dispelled those ridiculous ideas, and they smiled, and wondered how they could be so weak, as to allow them to intrude. But the solitary hour—the place in which they stood—the solemn note of the organ—the pelting of the rude storm without—and the gloomy appearance of the chapel within, which the partial rays of a single lamp served only to render more hideous—the slight glimpse they had of the warlike figure of Carracci, flitting through the shades of the distant arches, then almost lost in misty obscurity, together with the chill damp air of that long-neglected spot—all these united, we should think, ought to be a sufficient excuse for the momentary terror which assailed the bosoms of those two agitated and unprotected females; who,

from the nature of their situation, had every thing to dread, from the cruelty or malice of a man, to whose power they were subject, and from whom there was no immediate prospect of escaping.

Alexena, when somewhat composed, asked the meaning of the organ's dismal sounds.

“It is a signal that Lord Mortimer approaches,” said Clarissa.

Again, another and a more lengthened note was wafted along the lofty aisles, and the next instant the organ presented a sheet of livid fire; each barrel sent forth a blaze, while the repeated sounds of the bass, roared like the thunder of destructive cannon. Our heroine caught the arm of Louisa, while Clarissa, pointing to the gallery, said,—“He comes!”

They looked, and saw the pillars which supported the instrument, rend asunder, and Lord Mortimer, attended by Carracci, emerge from their bosom. The latter motioned to Clarissa, to lead

Louisa to a distance; his lordship observed them—flew rapidly along the gallery—descended the stairs, almost without touching them—and in an instant was at the feet of his Alexena; she sighed deeply—saw him not—but sunk into his expanded arms, overpowered by emotion. Mortimer clasped her to his heart; the warm kiss of love restored her, and their tears of mutual joy were mingled. Then might his lordship truly say,

——— She is mine own!

And I as rich in having such a jewel,

As twenty seas, if all their sand were pearl,

The water nectar, and the rock's pure gold.

As she gave him a short recital of all she had suffered since their parting in Bayonne; and in return, with wonder, learned, that she had been accompanied by him to the very castle gates.

The wonderful Carracci was not forgotten; he received from both, their most warm acknowledgments; and the first bright tints of dawn had dis-

pelled the darkness ere the lovers thought of separating. But to remain longer in the chapel would be highly imprudent; and after Belzo had given his word they should shortly meet again, they unwillingly parted, Lord Mortimer following his predaceous guide; while Alexena, supported by Clarissa and her cousin, slowly retraced her meandering way to her solitary chamber.



CHAP. XI.

“ ——— Can such things be,
And overcome us like a summer’s cloud,
Without our special wonder.”

SHAKSPEARE.

WE must now beg leave to lead our readers back to the crimson chamber, where we left Lord Mortimer, the first night of his captivity.

When Monfrane retired from that apartment, his lordship rose and examined every crevice of it, and having secured the entrance with several arti-

cles of heavy furniture, sought his bed, where busy thought drove sleep from his weary eyes. Carracci was connected with every idea, and he vainly endeavoured to develop the cause of that robber's kindness ; kindness unsought, unlooked for, and unexpected. All was yet a mystery—he was treated as a state prisoner ; though Belzo promised his assistance, and had exacted an oath from his troop, that they would destroy Acasto, and rescue Alexena, there was something undefinably strange in this ; yet the elegant address, suavity of manner, noble figure, and animated countenance, of the freebooter, secured his lordship's good opinion ; indeed, so much so, that he was ashamed of the caution he had used, in securing the aperture to his room, (for it could not be called a door,) particularly, when Monfrane endeavoured to enter the next morning. He then apologized for his want of confidence, at which the latter smiling said, “ Had any injury been intended, his lordship's barriers would

have been useless, as there were four other private entrances; two in the walls, one in the floor, and one in the ceiling; through which the entire of the banditti might have entered, without disturbing his repose."

Albert was then summoned, and felt happy on seeing his lord in safety, and began to entertain a better opinion of his late ferocious acquaintances. When his lordship was dressed, Monfrane informed him, he had orders to shew him to the breakfast-room, where Carracci waited, and in a few moments, he was conducted through those passages, which had excited so much wonder the night before, into the hall next the banqueting chamber of the troop, where they found four iron chairs, and Rourke already fastened in one of them. Lord Mortimer and Albert sat on two of the others, at Monfrane's request, and in a moment after, the vaulted roof of the hall rung with the signal whistle. Instantly, the chairs sunk through the floor, and

rested on a large marble table, in a chamber underneath, which was handsomely furnished, and where Carracci and the good priest, whom his lordship recognized as his friend Zelo, waited to receive him. The former hastened to assist Lord Mortimer, while Monfrane rendered the same service to his lordship's domestics; which was extremely necessary, as the moment their weight was removed from the chairs, they flew with amazing swiftness into their former positions, and closed the cavity in the ceiling that their descent had formed. There were six marble steps from the table to the floor, inlaid with curious devices, which his lordship afterwards examined with much satisfaction, and the morning passed in agreeable conversation. The chamber they were in, was many feet below the surface of the earth, and the light of day never had visited it; but flaming torches, and an excellent fire, dispelled its natural gloom, and substituted in its stead their light; heat; and

comfort. Carracci entertained his lordship by giving him a description of those amazing subterranean vaults. "You are," said he, "in the dungeons of the castle of Santa Marco, though half a mile from the building itself. This may seem incredible, from the length of way you have been conveyed here ; but nothing is more certain, and I shall this day, if you wish, carry you to the very central chambers of it, and will, probably, be able to gratify you with a glimpse of your fair mistress, if you think you have fortitude to follow me through the most horrible caverns that ever yet were formed by nature, assisted by man's ingenuity ; but should you be so inconsiderate as to discover yourself to lady Alexena, your life shall pay for your temerity, and her misery will be endless."

"Doubt not my discretion," replied his lordship, "lead on, and I will fearlessly follow, even was death to assume a thousand frightful forms to scare me from my purpose. I will promise to

be guided by your advice, and faithfully, nay sacredly, observe the most trivial of your injunctions, if not inconsistent with my honour; and allow me to say, nothing could give me greater pleasure, than wandering with you through the astonishing meanderings of this subterranean world, and I shall feel doubly gratified, if you allow my servants to attend us."

"Oh! certainly, my lord," said Belzo, "if you think they are as fearless as yourself.

"I never had reason to doubt their courage—father Zelo himself has had proof of it, and will, I should think, vouch for their firm and steady conduct."

"That I will, with all my heart," observed Zelo, "though I sha'n't be of the party to those solitary abodes, for I feel no curiosity to revisit them; I prefer a book and a good fire to wandering through the gloomy passages of the almost endless caverns of the castle."

Monfrane was now summoned to prepare proper torches for their intended scrutiny, together with two small lamps, which he produced in a very few minutes. Carracci then girt on his massy sword, and placed two case of pistols in his belt. His lordship, Monfrane, and the servants, were also armed, and after each had sworn to keep whatever he should see, a profound secret, they began their inspection of those long-neglected abodes of gloom and darkness. The chimney-piece in the breakfast-room was made of black shining metal, to each side of which were fastened two large brass rings; through these, Carracci and Monfrane conveyed a rope, and then, assisted by the party present, who had to use their utmost force, they succeeded in drawing out the chimney-piece, grate, &c. into the floor, disclosing, to the inexpressible surprise of his lordship, a door beyond the chimney, which stood half open, inviting them to enter a narrow rocky

chamber, which terminated in a flight of almost perpendicular steps. This his lordship entered—Carracci made a signal, by touching a small bell, and in a very few moments, several of the troop attended, who pushed the grate into its former position, enclosing Belzo, Lord Mortimer, and his attendants, in the narrow cell, the stairs of which they ascended with difficulty, and reached a small platform, before a passage, secured by a strong iron grating, where the former paused, and drew from beneath his cloak a horn, with which he made the caverns resound—and echo answered from the farthest extremity. Figures were now observable moving through the gloom ; in a few seconds, the massive gothic door slowly receded, and they entered a vaulty cave, cut out of the solid rock, through which they rapidly glided. This passage terminated in an oval chamber in which were a vast number of vessels, as

large as hogsheads, with small ladders placed against the sides of them. "Stop," said Carracci, "and let each of you jump into one of those cisterns, the bottoms of which will sink with your weight, and you will then be gradually lowered by slings, into a chamber underneath, and from thence we will proceed to the castle." In a moment they ascended the ladders, and then leaped with all their force through the hollow sides of the vessels, which instantly sunk, not into a chamber, but into a cavern of immense extent, where they distinctly heard the hoarse roaring of a torrent; and as the reflection of the dark red gleam of the torches played on the black and rocky sides of this vaulty cave, superstitious dread presented a thousand vague forms flitting through the distant gloom, which caused undefinable sensations in the agitated group, who moved forward, in order to ascend a long, rocky flight of rugged and irregular steps, that led to a still more irregular mass of crags

—rough, difficult, and uneven, in the extreme. Over these they scrambled, with much pain and labour, being sometimes obliged to creep on all-fours; during which time they frequently were in danger of burning themselves with the torches, or extinguishing them, and the latter would have ensured destruction. These horrible vaults, however, gradually widened, and the thunder of a cataract, added terrors to the savage scene. In a few minutes, our adventurers were able to walk upright, and rushed forward with unrestrainable impatience—often at the risk of their lives, notwithstanding the repeated cautions of Carracci; but here their further passage was impeded by a black rock, immensely high, and perpendicularly steep; it supported the cavern's roof, and apparently presented an impassable boundary. There the party paused, and Lord Mortimer turned to Belzo, with a look so expressive of inquiry, that the former understood its meaning, without its being accompanied

by words, and instantly stooped to remove a scanty portion of earth from the surface of the spot on which he stood, and quickly discovered to his lordship's astonished eyes, a prodigious iron ring, fastened in a stone flag. This, with Rourke's assistance, he raised, and disclosed a flight of stairs, the lower steps of which were enveloped in impenetrable darkness, and prevented the possibility of ascertaining their extent, or where they terminated. Carracci gazed on the yawning abyss, and at that moment, the torch which he bore, cast a strong light on his countenance, which was evidently agitated, by sensations that he wished to conceal. Lord Mortimer, though disconcerted, made no observation; but Albert could not suppress his fears, and, without hesitation, boldly forbade his master to venture into that horrible den.—“Why should he not?” inquired Carracci, in a voice that made the latter tremble. “Have I not pledged my honour for his safety?—Away with

cowardly fears, if any here entertain them ; follow me, for hesitation is death," he said, and plunged into the stony bosom of the gulph. Lord Mortimer and Rourke fearlessly followed ; but Albert, always cautious, suspected treachery, and watched each movement of his guide, with the vigilance of an Argus. One minute was sufficient to descend those stairs, which brought them into a lofty hall ; this they crossed, but were obliged to stop at a large heavy door, which, with considerable difficulty, they partly opened, and then, the noise of the water became tremendous, exciting the greatest anxiety to learn from whence it came. At length, when this impediment was removed, a scene romantically terrible, arrested their attention. At a few paces farther, there was a flight of six steps, cut in the solid rock, which were washed by water that fell from frightful precipices, elevated, at least, one hundred feet above the hall. The roof of this part of the cavern was of

a variety of colours, formed by the reflection of the light on the petrefactions and spar, caused by the dripping of the water. The foaming torrent fell into a kind of natural basin, before the door of the hall, and from thence rushed, with irresistible impetuosity, until it was precipitated over another ridge of rocks, which lay a trifling distance below the steps, and tumbled, with the noise of the loudest thunder, into the rocky gulph, that groaned as it received its weight. There were two tripods suspended from the roof, which, to Lord Mortimer's great surprise, were lit, and faintly served to illumine this rude—this dread scenery. Carracci gazed on its rugged deformity; but to him its terrors were familiar. He smiled on its frowning crags, and pointed to the opposite side, which presented a smooth upright rock, without any projection, on which the roof of this wondrous production of nature rested.

“ We must cross this rivulet,” said Belzo, sportively; “ and here is a boat ready for the purpose.”

“Where?” demanded his lordship.

“In this creek,” continued Carracci, as he pointed out the little vessel, which lay lower down, between the rocks. Lord Mortimer observed it, and shrunk back terrified, as it was not much larger than himself. The robber’s eyes now flashed displeasure, as, in a rough sullen voice, he said, “Do you doubt my honour?—Say, what have you to fear? Do you not observe a strong iron grating across the torrent, which prevents the possibility of our little bark tumbling over. She will be carried by the current to its edge, and we will push her along, with the assistance of the barrier, into a small cavity, not now discernible in the gloomy distance, and from thence there are steps formed in the rock, which will lead you in safety from this place—the cause of your present fears.” He then unfastened the boat-chain, but held it until Lord Mortimer and his attendants were seated, then springing on board, the vessel rushed, with the

lightning's swiftness, towards the iron railing ; and as they approached, Carracci used a pole to prevent her striking violently against it ; yet the shock, notwithstanding his utmost exertion, shook the grate with such force, as threatened instant destruction ; but it was merely momentary, and while the boat lay along side, her passengers stood up to observe the torrent as it fell with hideous din, at least seventy feet beneath them, into the stony gulph. From that rocky bed, it rolled under the draw-bridge, from thence into an earthy cave, which conveyed it to the sea, and was lighted as it passed, by several lamps, fastened to the chains of the bridge, whose feeble rays served to show its many horrors.

“ Have we to cross that frightful bridge ? ” demanded Lord Mortimer.

“ Yes, ” replied Carracci, “ the rock on which we are about to land, forms a kind of cave, and through it we will pass, and issue at its termination, on that structure which will again enable us to cross these waters. ”

They then landed, and his lordship was surprised to see the boat return to its former station, without any visible assistance. On requiring an explanation, Belzo informed him, there was a small chain fastened to her keel, one end of which was conveyed through a cavity in the rock, and secured in the hall opposite, where one of the troop then attended to draw her back to the little creek, that had been formed for her safety.

Carracci now led them up a narrow flight of irregular steps, and passed through a small natural door-way into a cave of a conical form, slanting towards its extremity, which they descended with considerable difficulty from its steepness, and from the rock being excessively slippery. However, they reached the draw-bridge, which had been lowered, and hastily passed over its half-decayed planks, to a projecting platform, scarce broad enough to admit of six persons standing together,

and from it there was no visible passage, by which they could advance. Here his lordship stood gazing in mute astonishment, admiring the cataract, whose spray, however, rendered his situation far from agreeable ; and he was about to request his guide to move forward, when Rourke laid his hand on his arm, at the same time pointing to the grim faces of several horrible bandits, whose almost bursting eyes glared murder, as they lay grinning and peeping through several holes in the cavern's dripping roof. Carracci observed them, and ordered ladders to be instantly lowered, which he had some pains to persuade his lordship to ascend ; but the robbers assisted them above, and in a few moments, they were all drawn through those narrow openings in safety. The scene now changed ; a gentle acclivity led them to a passage, formed by man's ingenuity, which they were informed, lay under the glen, where the rock stood that supported the vast castle of Santa Marco. In it,

at regular distances, there were iron gates, fastened to its flinty sides, for the locks of which Carracci had a master key; so they proceeded without interruption into the dungeons, whose gloomy cells lay in every direction. From thence they wound among an infinite variety of vaulty caverns, until they reached the cemetery, where the bones of the Santa Marco family were deposited. Their coffins were arranged on large oak benches, which, like those they supported, were mouldering into dust, and impressed on the minds of our wandering group, the inevitable end of all human greatness. There lay the warrior, the statesman, the steady friend, and merry companion, whose—"flashes of merriment were wont to set the table in a roar."—There forms, once beautiful; but, alas! their sweets had melted in the grave, leaving no trace, save a few marrowless bones, and a scanty portion of offensive dust. Their virtues, however, were rescued from oblivion, and were inde-

libly engraven on the hearts of their mourning countrymen. Cenotaphs in the chapel, briefly recited the splendid achievements of those illustrious heroes who fell in distant climes; but those mementos had long since ceased to be objects of public inspection—ceased to inspire the neighbouring youth with the wish to emulate their virtuous example. And the reason was obvious—Acasto was then lord over all.

While they continued in the cemetery, Carracci was apparently much agitated, and more than once wiped away the unbidden tear. His lordship was surprised, but held such feelings sacred, and made no observation until Belzo pointed to a coffin, which, from its freshness, could not have been long tenanted.

“There,” said he, “lies the dearest friend of my infancy; it was he that first led me through these subterraneans—pointed out the path to virtue, to happiness; but, alas! how have I strayed; yet let me not disturb his

shade, by the repetition of my heedlessness and ingratitude.”

Here a hollow groan seemed to rend the coffin, accompanied by an exclamation of—Heaven have mercy!—

Lord Mortimer fervently ejaculated an amen! while Carracci looked wildly round for an explanation of those words, but none there could give it. He now paused for some moments, then said, let us proceed, and instantly rushed forward to the foot of a stately monument, which touched the vaulty ceiling; when at its base, he drew his sabre, and with its point seemed to trace the half obliterated inscription, for the apparent purpose of developing its obscure meaning; but the ensuing moment proved he sought for a spring concealed among its letters, which was no sooner pressed than it burst open with a tremendous noise, disclosing a spiral staircase of black marble; this they ascended, and at the top found themselves inclosed in a hollow column; here again Carracci touched a spring,

which instantly admitted them into a spacious chamber, and the same moment the pillar closed with a horrible crash; Belzo then cautioned his lordship and attendants to be silent, as they were in the immediate vicinity of the castle chapel, at the same time pointing to the further end of the chamber, where there was a curtain, which reached from the ceiling to the floor, and this was no sooner drawn up than his lordship discovered the organ. Carracci then applied his torch to a small portion of cumbustible matter, which caused that extraordinary light that afterwards terrified Alexena so much. He then raised a small pannel, touched, the keys, and the following moment was admitted through one of its pillars into the gallery of the chapel, which he never entered without first using this precaution, being convinced were any of Acasto's people in it, those extraordinary sounds and appearances would be deemed supernatural, and deter them from repeating

their visit. With all this Clarissa was acquainted; and of course felt no uneasiness the night she led our trembling heroine to its mouldering altar; but was forbidden to elucidate the mystery for the present, lest some unforeseen fatality might be the consequence.

After his lordship had examined every thing worth notice which it contained, his kind guide conducted him into the adjoining chambers; explained their several uses; their private outlets and entrances; and for what purposes they were originally contrived: from thence they proceeded to the armoury, banqueting rooms, and library; then crossed the hall; ascended the great stairs, and entered a corridor, which brought them by a circuitous route, into the secret passage, behind the sliding pannel of Alexena's apartment, a part of which Carracci slowly and cautiously opened, and disclosed to the enraptured Mortimer the fair object of his affections, reading to her cousin Louisa; unconscious of the vicinity

of such a dear and welcome intruder. While his lordship stood gazing, Alexena laid down the book, and after reminding her companion of the lateness of the hour, prepared to dress for dinner. "My dear Louisa," she continued, "with what pleasure I should make my toilet, was my Mortimer to be one of the party at table; but heaven forbid he should ever become an inmate of this house; what would I not give to be convinced of his safety; though that is a pleasure I can scarce ever hope to enjoy; for, alas! how is intelligence to be conveyed to or from this horrible castle; oh! my cousin, it is an absolute impossibility."

"Well," replied Louisa, with a playful smile, "I should never despair, particularly, were my lover as true as you represent your's to be; poor fellow, if he but knew what sighs, what tears, what prayers, he has cost you since your arrival here, his heart would ache; nay, he would give worlds to enjoy Abdallah's ring for one short hour, that he might

glide on the sightless air, and whisk through the key-hole to his sweet love. In faith, I fear he would assume some insect shape, and sip the dewy honey of that panting lip; and if so, I know not where he could find a more delicious banquet."

"Fie! fie! Louisa, you really make me blush."

"Really!—ah! my fair cousin, if I mistake not, you would willingly hide those blushes in Mortimer's fond bosom; heaven preserve him, and restore you to each other."

"My heart says amen to that," observed our heroine, "and may the Almighty render him happy, should we never meet."

"Amen," reiterated Louisa, "but I doubt the possibility of such an event; let me see——if I could command a wish, I really think, I would trust his lordship into the hands of that frightful cut-throat Carracci, for I am so strongly prejudiced in the robber's favour, that I make no doubt, was he

acquainted with the eventful story of your loves, he would hang Acasto, throw the monk out of the window, blow up the castle, and restore you to each other."

Again Louisa beguiled Alexena of a smile, who now playfully said, " I should not be surprised, if you were next to wish yourself the wife of that predaceous captain. What a pretty picture those taper fingers of your's would make, sporting in the dark curls that shade his brow, or when elegantly employed in buckling on his armour, ere he went forth to *relieve the distressed of their last ducat* ; yet, was I reduced to the dreadful necessity of accepting either he or Acasto, as a husband; I should not hesitate to fix on Carracci. He might be reclaimed, but as to the other—oh ! that were impossible."

" Doubtless, Don Philip would be extremely obliged for this kind opinion," observed Louisa, " and you, I suppose, say he is as welcome to, as he

is deserving of, it; but, hark! the bell gives the signal that Margaret will be here presently, so let us hasten, lest that savage monk may eat us instead of his dinner. I wish Carracci were here, that he might march down with us to whet Montano's appetite, with whom he is already a great favourite; at least it is but fair to suppose so, as the latter is most anxious to make the bandit a present of a brace of bullets; he thinks two leaden eyes would be of infinite advantage—would, in fact, be an acquisition to the robber, much desired by both Acasto and himself. For the truth is, Carracci sees too far with those bright crystalline orbs, which he is at present in possession of, and the former *kindly* wishes to add about an ounce of that heavy metal to prevent the possibility of his discerning quite so much.

The party in the passage had anxiously listened to this conversation; but Carracci, through his impatience to catch every syllable, defeated his purpose by

drawing his hand from the spring, which caused the pannel to slap too with considerable force, and nearly deprived Alexena and her friend of motion; they both screamed, and their late merriment was exchanged for the agony of terror; but, fortunately, they knew not from what part of their chamber the noise issued, and after a few moments reflection, were inclined to believe it was one of the doors of the adjoining apartment, which had been shut by the violence of the wind.

Lord Mortimer remained until Margaret summoned them to the saloon, then followed Carracci to his retreat, and it was nigh eight o'clock before they recrossed the cataract, the sight of which was sufficient almost to paralyze the stoutest heart, and when they again found themselves in the room, where they had left Father Zelo, they were much in need of nourishment and rest, and when his lordship had partaken of the former, he joyfully followed Monfrane to his chamber.

From that day forward, Lord Mortimer had permission to visit the castle, and joyfully availed himself of it. In many of his solitary rambles, he recognized Acasto and his old enemy, and fervently prayed for the hour in which they should be delivered into the hands of justice. Belzo had already written to his lordship's friends, and had sent trusty guides to convey them, in different disguises to the castle, which hourly became the scene of riot and confusion. Acasto had collected a number of desperate men to guard his mansion, and to seize all travellers who should pass in the vicinity of it, whom he detained until such time as he was able to ascertain their name, business, and whether they were enemies or not. In consequence of this outrageous attack on the liberty of strangers, many had lost their lives, and more had been wounded; none, however, were stripped of their property, except those few who were so

unfortunate as to excite Acasto's particular suspicion or dislike.

One evening, on which his lordship returned from the castle, quite disconsolate, in consequence of not seeing Alexena, he was met and questioned by Carracci, who, in consideration of his disappointment, promised him an interview with her the following night, on condition that he should have the final arrangement of the time and place. His lordship could scarce credit the evidence of his senses, at this most unexpected indulgence, and again and again thanked Belzo for his many and repeated exertions in endeavouring to make him happy. "Say no more," said Carracci, "or I shall feel ashamed. Compose your thoughts, and resolve to act with steadiness and resolution, while I shall, in the mean time, prepare your mistress, who will need your support, together with her own fortitude, to bear, the pain of separation, which must necessarily follow." He then retired, and left his lordship to

ehide the lazy moments that were to intervene, before the blissful hour in which he should again fold his Alexena to his bosom

Carracci, in the letters he had written to Lord Mortimer's friends, stated the particular manner in which he was situated, and impressed the conviction, that nothing less than the utmost caution and vigilance, would enable him to emancipate his lordship and the lovely Alexena; whom Clarissa had undertaken to conduct to the castle chapel the following night, to meet her lover—to renew their vows of everlasting constancy—to mourn over the unforeseen events which placed our heroine in the power of Montano and his infernal master—and to rejoice and praise heaven for its kindness, in bestowing such a friend as Belzo Carracci.

CHAP. XI.

" ————— If the midnight bell
 Did, with his iron tongue and brazen mouth,
 Sound one unto the drowsy race of night ;
 If this same were a church-yard where we stand,
 And thou possessed with a thousand wrongs ;
 * * * * *
 * * * * *
 Or if that thou couldst see me without eyes,
 Hear me without thine ears, and make reply
 Without a tongue, using conceit alone,
 Without eyes, ears, and harmful sound of words ;
 Then, in despite of brooded watchful day,
 I would into thy bosom pour my thoughts :
 But, ah ! I will not."

KING JOHN.

WHEN Clarissa had seen her friends
 to their apartment, she hastened away,
 and, as Acasto was unwell after the
 last night's debauch, it was almost
 noon before Margaret entered to an-
 nounce breakfast. On descending, our
 heroine found three strangers, whose
 appearance was far from prepossessing,
 but to whom Acasto did not think pro-
 per to introduce her. The conversa-
 tion was chiefly about the ramparts,
 parts of which were rather in a ruinous

state, and of intended alterations, preparatory to Don Philip's marriage, which he asserted was an event he looked forward to the speedy consummation of.

“ I cannot conceive,” observed Montano, addressing Acasto, “ why you have been so long inattentive to your happiness, as I will confidently affirm the fault is not lady Alexena's; indeed, she even values your wishes so highly, that, I am certain, she would feel a little reluctance in being led to the altar, *by you*, this day, as in a month hence.”

“ Oh ! I believe you,” said Acasto, with a sneer ; “ but I cannot exactly say I understand the meaning of the *compliment* you so *good-naturedly* intended for us both.”

“ Nor I, neither !” exclaimed Louisa, but please understand *this*, Alexena de Guzman will willingly perish, rather than wed that wretch who would insult, or suffer her to be insulted, at his own table.”

Alexena blushed deeply ; her feelings were dreadfully shocked at the insult offered in the presence of strangers, and held down her head to hide the starting tears, without making any reply, while Montano, that brutal, shameless, selfish, loathed beast ; that slave of savages ; felt—I know not what. Could it be, that a woman's tears, a lovely, innocent, beautiful woman, whom he had injured, abused, insulted, maltreated, and would have murdered, for an assassin's fee—could it be, that those tears of her's, shed in the presence of others—drawn from her agitated bosom by his unfeeling expressions—awakened sleeping remorse ? or was it, that he now felt, for the first time, that a triumph over helplessness, served only to render him despicable in the eyes of those strangers ? be it what it may, he blushed ; but his was not the blush of conscious innocence. It was not that divine emblem of purity ; it was the burning fire of

a guilty conscience, that blazed for a moment on his visage, then faded into the yellow sickliness of deadly rage—rage begotten by the idea, that he even fell in the estimation of his villanous associates, by encreasing the distress of that sex which he was created to sooth, to cherish, and to protect. The observation of Don Philip encreased his confusion; so much so, that he was unable to reply to Louisa's pointed sarcasm, and the former, though evidently enraged, also remained silent. In fact, the feelings of all present were now painfully embarrassed; but the monk, who had rapidly regained his mental powers, with a languid laugh, in the imitation of which fiends would fail, said, he begged pardon for his untimely jest, and should he be so fortunate as to obtain forgiveness, he would, in future, carefully avoid matrimonial subjects. Alexena now rose to withdraw, but before she retired, overheard Acasto say, in low, dark, and broken sentences—"Montano, follow me to

the secret chamber of the south tower, as soon as our friends depart, and I shall there communicate end of this trifling this night Alexena's chamber Do you observe see Hugo I am resolved on it."—Here his voice was lost in a murmuring whisper; but our affrighted heroine had heard enough to make her wretched, and with difficulty, tottered from the room, supported by Louisa. When in the solitude of her apartment, she communicated her fears, and the cause of them; but it was not in the power of her friend to point out the means of either escape or safety, as Torquo was acquainted with the private passage, and all the adjacent chambers. To inform Carracci of their distress was impossible, except heaven should send him to their apartment; and they were yet consulting, when Margaret entered, whose countenance was the picture of woe.

“What is the matter, good Margaret?” said Louisa.—“You are, I fear, unwell.”

“Oh! matter enough, Donna. There have been several prisoners brought here by my lord’s savage people; among whom, there is a beautiful young girl, who, unfortunately for herself, was dressed in man’s apparel, and in a scuffle that took place between her lover and the monk, the latter, not knowing her sex, shot her.”

“Gracious heaven! is it possible?” shrieked Alexena.

“Alas! it is too true,” replied Margaret; “Montano endeavoured to drag her to one of the towers, where prisoners are confined, supposing she was a young lad, from whose terrors he might extract information; but of what nature, I am ignorant. While they were yet struggling, a noble cavalier rushed to her assistance, and pushed the monk backward, who tripped, and fell over some loose stones. This was

the fatal moment ; for Montano, in his rage, fired at him, and killed the lady."

"Unfortunate young creature!" said Louisa ; "is she dead?—gone beyond all hope?—Does not there yet exist a chance she may recover?"

"None whatever, Donna ; she is already as cold as marble, and her remains are lying on a table in the hall, exposed to the rude and unfeeling gaze of the brutal soldiery."

"Margaret ! Margaret !" faltered Alexena, "you have rendered me very wretched ; but while I yet have the power, let us hasten to the hall, and bear the body to this chamber, where it shall remain until it receives the last sad rites."

"From whom?" mournfully demanded Margaret, "is it from her murderer?"

"No!" replied our heroine, "I shall myself read the service, and this night her remains may be interred in the cemetery of the chapel. Come, I say, let us hasten to the hall, and save the

body of the hapless stranger from farther insult."

"My dear Donna, you talk wildly; bless your heart, the cavalier is standing close by, guarding her body with his bloody spear, and holding her clay-cold hand. His eyes are burning with rage and revenge, so none dare touch the body, nor approach within his spear's length. Heaven knows where this sad business may end; for the monk is now in deep consultation with Don Philip, in the secret chamber of the south tower, plotting some direful mischief."

"It is immaterial to me," replied Alexena; I am resolved to see this stranger, and offer my services; therefore, if you decline attending me, I shall go alone."

Margaret, finding her determined, assented, and led the way, while our heroine slowly followed, leaning on Louisa. On descending the stairs, they saw the mourning cavalier, leaning

over the remains of the unfortunate victim of Montano's blind rage; but as his back was towards them, it was impossible they could distinguish his features. A solemn stillness reigned around, uninterrupted, except by the sound of the distant laughter of the soldiery, who were regaling themselves after the fatigues of the day. When Alexena reached the hall, she was almost paralyzed, on beholding two or three dead bodies, horribly lacerated; and would have hastened back to her chamber, had she not been too near the stranger to retire; who, on hearing her footsteps, and those of her companions, quickly turned.—Louisa screamed—"oh! my brother!"—Alexena—"my cousin Bolerno!"—and the following instant they were both folded to his bosom.

After the first transports had subsided, he pointed to the corpse, and burst into tears; "alas!" said he, behold this lifeless form; in vain endeavours to rescue her from Don

Philip's marauders, I became his captive. She was crossing the mountain, attended by two stout guides, whose bodies you see here, when a number of those villains rushed from a thicket, and surrounded her, on which they fought, and fell fighting bravely in her defence.

During the contest, she several times called on some person named Carracci, and it was the wildness of her cries drew me to the spot, where I was almost instantly captured. I believe Montano has not recognized me, though we struggled for some moments, previous to his firing that shot, which has deprived this lovely girl of life. But as to where she was going, and for what reason she assumed this disguise, I know not, and it is likely it will remain a secret for ever, (at least in this world, as her attendants being both killed, prevents the possibility of a discovery." Alexena then requested he would bear the body to their chamber, which he

agreed to do, and they followed with tearful eyes; on reaching the great landing place, he proceeded straight forward, instead of turning to the left, and after wandering through several galleries, entered an apartment, the door of which stood half open, there Louisa discovered they had mistaken their way, and in endeavours to regain it, became more bewildered. Margaret had left them in the hall, and might not again seek them for several hours; this added to their perplexity, and Bolerno was so much fatigued, that he was unable to bear the body further, therefore laid it on a couch, in the chamber in which they then were. In this dilemma we must leave them, and return to Montano, who immediately after Alexena left the breakfast room, went out on the ramparts, to await the arrival of a party, who had been sent to reconnoitre in the neighbourhood of St. Sebastian. In less than half an hour he saw them approach, and on their entering the court-yard, observed the

extreme terror of the supposed youth, who he instantly resolved to detain, as an attendant on his own person, be his rank or quality what it might. On questioning the stranger, he perceived her confusion encrease, which gave birth to the ridiculous idea of her being a spy of Lord Mortimer's; no sooner, therefore, did he conceive this, than he determined to carry his captive into one of the prisons of the keep, and strictly examine her as to that important point; but her fears caused her death, as the moment she expressed her unwillingness to accompany him, he seized her by the collar, which led to a discovery of her sex. At this eventful minute, Bolerno shook the monk, upbraiding him with his brutality; then threw him on those stones, mentioned by Margaret, which led to the fatal catastrophe. When Montano saw the stranger fall, he retired, muttering execrations against his want of steadiness; but without making any further attempt against Bolerno, who would have

killed him on the spot, had he not been prevented by the guards. But the moment he disappeared, Henri bore the body to the hall, and on the soldiers and domestics gathering round, he snatched a spear from one of them, with which he swore to annihilate the first who should presume to utter an indecent jest, or offer the slightest insult to the body. The weapon being stained with the blood of her murdered attendants, increased the terrors of old Margaret, who had been a witness of this scene.

Montano, in the mean time, sought Acasto, who then waited in the tower, debating with himself, whether he should or should not confide the secrets of his bosom to his chaplain's keeping; he knew him to be an agent willing to commit any crime, no matter how horrible; but if he once employed Montano, he would then be in his power; which was an alternative he wished to avoid. Here, however, his meditations

were interrupted, by the entrance of the subject of them.

“Montano,” said Don Philip, “I wish to have your advice, how I shall overcome the obstinacy of Lady Alexena: ’tis evident she dislikes me, and without some powerful incitement, to be produced either by the effects of terror, or fear of dishonour, she will never consent to be my wife; and although I might now actually avail myself of her helpless situation, and compel her to receive my hand, yet such a measure could not insure my happiness; and was I to appear in the world again, how would it be possible to conceal our present proceedings. That Englishman would demand vengeance at the foot of the throne; and I have too many enemies to risk such a trial. Her brother is in my power, and was it possible to induce her to accept my hand, he could be easily removed.—You understand me?—”

The monk nodded significantly, and Acasto thus proceeded:—“But you are

aware, that unless Donna Alexena publicly avowed she became my wife without compunction, I could not enjoy a single ducat of her fortune, nor a crown of the immense revenue which Don Diego, Velasco's uncle, left him at his death. Now it is also evident, that Louisa has increased her dislike; I therefore wish to have her removed, and on consideration, think it were more merciful to give her to the grave at once, than let her linger in the gloomy torments of a noisome dungeon; the longer she continues about the person of Alexena, the more difficult it will be to remove the prejudices which she hourly instils into the innocent bosom of my fair captive. Now what say you to this very night?"

Acasto paused—but the monk spoke not—the former tried to summon courage to ask the reason, but his words were lost in their struggle for utterance, and died away in unprofitable sounds. Again he paused, and the silence was awful!—how to exter-

minate a human being, without leaving a trace of the horrid deed, was the subject of the thoughts of one, while the other calculated on what he should demand for the successful perpetration of the crime. At length, Montano said, "there has been too much blood shed here already; I like not the office which I understand you wish to assign me; but——"

"But, what?" impatiently demanded Acasto.

"I think my servant Hugo, with Torquo's assistance, would be able to accomplish it."

"Ah!" exclaimed Acasto, who paused, then turned his piercing eye on the monk, and tried to read on his furrowed brow the thoughts of his heart; but Montano guessed his intentions, and smoothed it even to the most calm placidity—aye—even at the moment when he had resolved to commit a detestable, foul, and horrible murder.

"Yes," said Philip, mentally, as he wondered at the monk's deep penetra-

tion, "he wishes to avoid becoming a principal, that I may be subject to his power; that he may be able to sacrifice me in a moment to his ambition or his interest; but I'll defeat his projects, by pretending I have given over the idea for the present; and yet, Louisa, this night shall be the last of your existence." Acasto now addressed Montano, and said, "I have turned this matter in my mind, and shall for a certain reason defer the arrangement for a few days longer; you can, in the mean time, think of it, and let me know the result; but not until you are rid of those *consciencious* scruples." Here Acasto could not suppress an ironical sneer, which was not lost on his *worthy* confessor, and the former then continued: "What is to be done with the body of that youth that fell by your hand this morning?"

"I am vexed at that unlucky incident," replied the monk, "and shall see him decently interred."

“ He should be much *obliged* to you,” observed Acasto; “ but I desire you may curb that fiery temper, as it ill becomes a prop of our Holy Church.”

Again Montano was disconcerted, and with an ill-feigned laugh, endeavoured to change the subject. Don Philip, however, enjoyed his embarrassment sometime longer; then dismissed him, in order to dress.

When he had retired, the former summoned Torquo, who he commanded to dismiss the prisoners that had been captured that morning, and after dinner to assist the monk in burying the remains of the lad then lying in the hall. Torquo observed, that Donna Alexena had removed the body to her own apartment; at least, so Margaret had informed him, and that the stranger had assisted in bearing it there. Acasto was excessively enraged at this circumstance, and desired Torquo to bring the cavalier before him instantly; but became infuriated, when he understood that Fernandez, captain of the guard,

had discharged him a very few minutes before, agreeable to his own order, which he forgot had been issued previous to his interview with the monk. Torquo represented the impossibility of retaking him; and after a few moments he became reconciled, by reflecting, that it was more than unlikely Alexena would inform an entire stranger of her situation, particularly a prisoner, without assistants, or hope of enlargement. Acasto, therefore, dismissed every disagreeable thought on the subject, and descended to the drawing-room with a placid brow, where he had not been many minutes, before Montano entered, who was not even then reconciled to himself, for refusing to obey Acasto; but knew not how to recommence the conversation; and Don Philip was much in the same situation. He wished Louisa dead, but had informed his confessor, he had given over the idea; should he now renew the subject, it would betray an anxiety, which it were

impossible to conceal from the wily monk. They had been together several minutes before either spoke; their thoughts were merciless, stern, and bloody, and they feared to give them utterance. The cold perspiration of dire anxiety stood trembling on Acasto's forehead; his heart laboured with the secret of a black and savage deed; he was bewildered by frightful thoughts; and the dark page of his foul intent, would have been lost in obscure confusion;—rendered illegible, had not the murderous blazing of Montano's eye re-kindled and illumed it; one moment was sufficient—they understood each other—Montano stretched forth his hand—it was grasped by Acasto, who squeezed it—

“This night!”—said the latter.

“This very night!”—reiterated the monk.

“No idle, womanish, fears!” continued Don Philip.

“None! the thought is unworthy of my former services.”

“Forgive me! and I am bound to you for ever,” said Acasto. The monk caught his hand—gazed expressively on his face; it was enough—that bond of their villany was sealed, which was to witness against them at that great and dreaded day, when we shall all be called to a strict account. Just then the castle clock struck seven, and Don Philip started at the sound; “In a few short hours, Louisa,” he said, “shall sleep in death, and nought then can disturb you further; yet it may be, thy pure spirit will wander through those gloomy chambers in search of your friend; perhaps, stalk across my path, and point to your gory wounds; what then?—you will be a harmless shade, and cannot hurt me; but living, you thwart my plans, vex and mock my purposes—so die you must! the twelfth hour this night, shall ring thy death-knell; once done, it were well;—down pity, down—but hush! here she comes, innocent as the unconscious lamb when led to slaughter; and there stands her unfeel-

ing butcher. Montano, I do hate thee now, thou art an ugly devil, yet I am blacker still; I can save—I will not, must not, cannot—cursed folly!—where are my thoughts wandering?—but here's my love; the cause, source, and spring of all my actions; I must speak fair, and swear, if there be need, I knew not of this morning's bloody work. Ah! here's Louisa, I wish she were again in her chamber; but no matter, her suspicions are lulled, she fears nought; then why should I tremble so?"

Here Acasto's reflections were interrupted by the presence of the ladies; and he had scarce apologized for the lateness of the hour, before Larco entered, to announce dinner. The same party that had breakfasted, met in the dining parlour, and they sat down in gloomy silence. Acasto was thoughtful; the Monk malicious; Fernandez sullen; and the strangers discontented. Shortly after the desert, Don Philip complained of a violent head-ache,

and rose to withdraw; which was a welcome signal to our heroine, as she was then suffered to return to her chamber. Montano continued at table with the remainder of the company, who drank pretty freely; pouring libations to the rosy god until a late hour; but the moment they separated, the monk prepared to execute his direful mission; and with a pistol in one hand, and a torch in the other, he cautiously proceeded towards Alexena's apartment, where his victim sat unconscious of the approach of her intended murderer.

CHAP. XII.

“ ————— Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell !
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes ;
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry, hold ! hold !

MACBETH.”

WHILE our heroine and her friends fatigued themselves, in vain endeavours to regain her chamber, Bolerno accounted for his appearance in the Pyrennees. He had been in Spain some months, when business of considerable importance called him to Bayonne, where he was obliged to go ; and for the present give over his fruitless search after Louisa ; who he found, had been carried off by Don Velasco, Alexena's brother ; and that neither had been heard of since the night of their departure from Madrid. On his return from France, he was captured by Acasto's people, and to his inex-

pressible surprise, found his sister in the castle of Santa Marco.

Louisa had frequently been urged by Alexena, to relate the particulars of the misfortune which placed her in Don Philip's power, but that affectionate girl could not be prevailed on to inflict the pain which her sad recital must have necessarily given; however, to conceal the facts longer were impossible; she, therefore, told her brother, that Don Velasco had been a considerable time her favoured suitor; that she had listened to his professions, and consented to be his wife, without entertaining an idea of a clandestine marriage. Velasco applied to her friends, and was peremptorily refused, in consequence of which, he forcibly carried her off, assisted by a number of young cavaliers of the city, who accompanied them to the vicinity of the castle, where they were surprised by a number of Acasto's marauders, and made prisoners. On the morning after their

arrival, Velasco was escorted within a league of Fontarabia, and left to find his way back to Madrid, while Louisa was doomed to suffer numberless persecutions of the nature of those to which our heroine was then exposed, and from the first day of her imprisonment, had not heard of her lover, except the vague account which Margaret had gathered from unconnected sentences dropped by the soldiery.

Louisa had proceeded thus far, when the noise occasioned by the shutting of an adjacent door, attracted their attention; and in a few minutes after, Montano came forth from Acasto's chamber, and hastened along a distant gallery, through which they cautiously followed him, until they regained the corridor that led to their own apartment, and where they had not been a moment before Margaret entered, accompanied by Fernandez. "Signior," said the latter, addressing Bolerno, "I have received Don Philip's orders for your

liberation; you will, therefore, please make all possible haste to the draw-bridge, lest he should countermand them, which, I fear much, he will do, if he finds you have been conversing with those ladies."

"For mercy's sake," said Louisa, "fly instantly, as in a very few minutes you may be too late, and you can render us no service while you are here."

"No! nor any where else," observed Fernandez."

Bolerno nodded, significantly, to his sister, who felt the value of the caution, and made no further observation. He then led her to a distant window, where he most solemnly conjured her to be unremitting in her attention to Alexena, whose liberation he confidently looked forward to, and was about to explain the reason, when Fernandez became so impatient, that they were obliged to separate; the pain of which we shall pass over in silence.

When they were somewhat composed, Margaret, who had remained, reminded them it was time to dress; and

they had scarce finished their toilet, ere the bell summoned them to the drawing-room, where they found Acasto absorbed in those reflections, from which their presence had awakened him.

On their return to their chamber; after dinner, they were surprised to find the furniture had been changed. Light and handsome chairs were substituted for the old and heavy moth-eaten ones, and the entire seemed new-modelled. There were several entertaining books, of various authors, scattered on the tables, with drawing implements, and a few very fine landscapes, which increased their wonder, and rendered them somewhat anxious to know to whom they were indebted for such valuable gifts. After they had inspected those new-found treasures, Louisa begged to read one of the books to Alexena, who felt much obliged, and the subject being an agreeable one, they perused it with considerable satisfaction. Having read to each other alternately, they were not fatigued, and

after supper, continued to pursue the story with increasing interest ; so much so, that the castle clock tolled twelve, before they were aware of the lateness of the hour. There was yet a few pages to finish, and Louisa gently wrested the book from our heroine, that she might ascertain in what manner it concluded, when her attention was attracted by a kind of rustling noise, which seemed within the apartment. After listening some time, without hearing a repetition of it, they carefully examined every corner, particularly nigh the door, and sat down again ; but Louisa had scarce touched her chair, which was opposite the panel, ere she, to her inexpressible terror, beheld a human eye blazing through it, burning, and beaming on her with excessive brightness. She became as motionless as the woodpecker, when infatuated by the eye of a rattlesnake ; and Alexena, who observed her wild and palid look, without being able to ascertain the cause, cast a scrutinizing

glance round the chamber, and also became horror-struck, on beholding, not the eye, but the arm, of a man, hanging from one of the pillars next the door; the hand of which was placed on that of an emblematic figure of safety, that stood in an adjoining recess.

“Gracious heaven!” said Alexena, in a whisper, “what can yonder arm mean?” Louisa heard her not, as she was attentively watching the pannel, from which the eye was, in a few moments, withdrawn, and—oh, horror!—the muzzle of a pistol introduced in its stead. She saw it, but was transfixed; her lips moved, but they produced no sound. Alexena did not observe her, being attracted by the arm, whose hand grasped that of the bust, which it had no sooner done, than the chair that supported Louisa fell to pieces, and she dropped at full length on the floor. The same instant, a bullet struck the distant wall, and the chamber was filled by the smoke of the

murderous weapon, which heaven rendered harmless, though it terrified our heroine to that degree that she shrieked many moments without intermission, and several had elapsed before she had power to raise her insensible friend, but even then, not having strength to support her, she fell from her feeble hold on the floor. Alexena was now incalculably wretched, and her distress was augmented by hearing footsteps in the passage; but they were those of the monk, who waited to ascertain whether his aim had proved fatal, and on seeing Louisa continue insensible; retreated to his chamber, to rejoice over the sum he conceived he had secured by her death.

When all again was silent, Alexena raised her cousin, who, with much difficulty, she placed on her bed, and was compensated for all her terrors, by seeing her gradually revive. As soon as Louisa could articulate, she explained the cause of her fainting, yet had not heard the report of the pistol; but

the chair having fallen so critically, attracted their attention, which they had scarce touched, before it resumed its former shape, and on examination, proved to be constructed on springs, which communicated with the bust, being conveyed from it under the floor.

“It is now evident,” said Louisa, “that we are protected by some person within the castle, who has resolved to save us from the murderous tyranny of Acasto, and this accounts for the change of furniture. I suspect Fernandez is that friend; if so, he could favour our escape, and I am resolved to use every inducement that is likely to have influence with him.”

Alexena assented to the necessity of the measure, without entertaining the slightest idea of its success; but she wished to encourage the hopes of her cousin, as they were likely to prove an antidote against despair, and apparently entered into all her wild schemes for liberty, without making one observation against the impracticability of executing them.

After two o'clock, they lay down on their beds, without undressing, having first earnestly entreated Almighty protection, and rose next morning, pale, agitated, and unrefreshed. On descending to the breakfast parlour, Don Philip started from his seat, almost petrified by amazement, on seeing Louisa, who Montano informed him he had shot quite dead; but on observing the significant looks which the ladies could not avoid exchanging, he, with consummate art, placed his evident perturbation to the uneasiness, he said, he could not avoid feeling at the apparent indisposition of both; but his surprise was trifling, when compared with the monk's, who had now entered the room. He doubted the evidence of his senses, and for several minutes, actually believed he beheld a spectre. His blood thickened with terror; his eyes were distended; his breathing convulsive; his frame paralyzed; his knees smote each other; and the cold dew of fear trembled on his brow, until he heard Louisa speak;

but then, her voice had the effect of a talisman—he cursed his folly, and was “himself again.”

“Her escape is unaccountable. I must have wounded her, and that severely,” he mentally said, “if so, ’tis out of the power of medicine to save her, and she has only escaped instant death to die in torments. The ball was poisoned by a most deadly drug, and her paleness says, it has already begun its work of destruction; but, Alexena is equally pale; therefore, I must have failed; no matter, when I try again, I shall use my faithful dagger, and there is no avoiding that. Well, Louisa, you shall have a week’s respite, and now for some plausible tale to drown suspicion, that I knew aught of this foul attempt; but, is it not time enough to make defence, when a man’s accused? certainly; however, I will be ready with a few suppositions, if called on; for, as to my having any knowledge of the transaction, oh! that’s quite impossible.” Thus did Montano ironically review

the recent attempt, and felt no remorse at his infamous cruelty; on the contrary, he looked forward to the repetition of it with malicious joy, and, with his deadly thoughts, already immolated his innocent victim, though he had resolved not to execute his savage purpose, until her suspicions were lulled, and she again rested in fancied security; but Don Philip thought quite differently; he suspected the monk had no intention to murder Louisa, and that some powerful inducement had urged him to spare her; he, therefore, determined to perpetrate the horrid deed that night himself, as it was likely she would sleep sound, after her recent fatigue; and, having thus resolved, he shortly after retired to his study, and ordered Torquo to attend him; but where he had not been many minutes, until he sent permission to Alexena, to walk in the court-yard, or on the ramparts, if she thought proper; and that Signiora Louisa might accompany her. Our heroine was much surprised

at this indulgence ; but both gladly availed themselves of it, and in the course of their rambles, ascended a watch tower, which commanded a fine view of the sea, surrounding coast, and the castle ; there they continued almost two hours, during which time, they made many observations on the impossibility of escaping from their prison, without the consent or connivance of some of Don Philip's people. From the tower, they proceeded to examine every thing worthy attention, and before the shades of evening fell, were weak with fatigue. On returning to their chamber, Margaret signified, " it was her lord's pleasure, they should dress with particular taste that day, as he momentarily expected the arrival of several guests. He desires," she continued, " that you will appear in your richest robes ; and Donna Alexena, you are to wear all the fine jewels he sent you ; don't neglect to obey him, for if you do, he will insult you before

those strangers, and, perhaps, turn you from the table."

"I am very unwilling to comply with those commands," observed Alexena, "but, it is vain to contend, as our tyrant is resolved to exact compensation for the walk with which he indulged us this morning."

"Yes," said Louisa, "and sent us out, merely, that the air might revive us after last night's alarm."

The idea of that dreadful circumstance, almost reduced them to despair, as they had no means to prevent a repetition of such nocturnal visitors, and it was evident, that the life of Louisa had been aimed at, for some particular reason, of which neither could form any fair conjecture; however, being obliged to reconcile themselves to the necessity of appearing at dinner, they began to dress, and in compliance with Acasto's commands, Alexena chose a white sattin robe, fancifully trimmed round the bosom, with a train of purple velvet, beautifully embroidered; her waist was

encircled with a zone of brilliants, while a tiara of diamonds confined her black hair, to which her polished brows added lustre.

“ I had not an idea,” said Louisa, “ that those jewels were so very pretty ; but, it is evident, their beauty is borrowed from the figure they were intended to adorn.” Our heroine blushed, but did not reply ; and after the second bell, both descended to the saloon, where they found only Don Philip and his confessor. On their entrance, the former arose, and led Alexena to the dining-room ; his countenance was dressed in smiles, and he seldom or ever was so attentive ; but his attentions were too pointed, to be otherwise than distressing ; they inflicted torments on her whom they were meant to please ; and when he found her inattentive to his protestations, his agitation betrayed the pain her evident disgust excited. While the visage of Montano was undefinable ; triumph, revenge, joy, anger, and discontent, followed each

other in such rapid succession, that it was utterly impossible to say, by which he was actuated ; and, in those moments, Louisa was tortured by his dark insinuations, into a belief, almost amounting to certainty, that it was he who had fired the shot the preceding night. Alexena's charms outrivalled the queen of beauty's ; they were irresistible, and it is impossible description could do them adequate justice. Don Philip beheld them with the eye of a miser, who is fearful of losing his treasure ; and he resolved to remove Louisa, who was evidently inimical to his wishes ; and as one, whose advice she observed with scrupulous exactness.

About an hour after the ladies had retired, Margaret attended in their chamber with coffee, and after she had set it on the table, said, “ a number of strangers have just arrived, but whether they are prisoners or not, I cannot say ; much confusion reigns below ; and I was obliged to get Torquo to carry a

bundle of dry faggots to your anti-chamber, as these nights are so cold and chill, unless you had a good fire, you must be very uncomfortable."

"I entreat," said Alexena, "you will go for the wood, and dismiss Torquo; he will be angry at being detained, and I shall be in agony while he remains so nigh."

"Oh! Donna, there is no fear of him, he is in excellent humour, or he would not have carried the wood, particularly when you recollect his shoulder is very badly hurt, from falling downstairs last night; I assure you, he cannot move his right hand, notwithstanding he contrived to hobble here with the faggots, because I told him, you would be obliged to sit without a fire if he did not."

"Well, I feel much obliged," observed our heroine, "but, good Margaret, do dismiss him, and should we want any thing, we will go to your apartment for it." At this moment, the sounds of distant and tumultuous

laughter rolled through the deserted corridors, and almost shook the castle. Alexena was now considerably alarmed, and before Margaret retired, sought an explanation.

“ Be not alarmed, dear Donna, those are the centinels that have just been relieved, who their companions are welcoming : I saw the day when such boisterous mirth would not be suffered within those walls, but times are strangely altered. Don Philip seems to have no power over his unruly household, or is insensible to their excesses, and we are likely to have fine doings below this night, as he has given them a few flaggons of wine to entertain the strangers, who, from what I have seen, are little better than those who brought them here.”

“ And who did bring them ?” inquired Louisa.

“ My lord’s soldiers, Signiora, who are the most abandoned set of wretches on earth. When I went to seek Torquo, to carry the fire wood, I was

obliged to go into the hall where they now are, and there the savages were tormenting a cavalier, who I never saw equalled in beauty. One begged to know was he hungry; a second, was he dry; a third, was he in love; a fourth, was he sleepy; and so he was teized by them all. To their questions, he replied by contemptuous looks, and, it is well if they don't murder him before Don Philip is informed he is in the castle."

"For heaven's sake, fly, and tell Don Acasto, he is in danger," said Alexena, "lose not a moment, lest you may be too late."

"I dare not, Donna, as my lord is now carousing with the friends he expected to dinner; but, I will try and prevail on Torquo, to save him from their fury, should he really be in danger." Margaret now retired, and Louisa then secured the door of their chamber, and drew a heavy table across the pannel, in order to create alarm, should any person attempt to

enter by that passage; but, Alexena observed, “ they had reason to believe, Acasto and the monk were too much engaged, by the arrival of the strangers, to think of them; and advised they should instantly retire to rest; the former willingly complied, and after they had solicited Heaven’s protection, undressed, and went to bed, having first trimmed their lamps, and set them on the hearth.

When Don Philip gave his captives permission to walk on the ramparts, it was for the purpose of adding to the fatigues of the preceding night, that they might sleep sound; for he was aware, they had not before seen the courts of the castle, except in their passage from the draw-bridge, and knew they would examine every tower and projection about them with peculiar interest. “ That, ” said he, “ will divert their attention, and assist my purposes; ” and he judged correctly, for they had been but a very few

minutes in bed, ere extreme weakness sealed all their faculties in deep sleep.

In the course of that day, Acasto mentioned his intention to Torquo, who was unable to comply with his wish, from the pain of his arm, which was powerless; but willingly consented to accompany him, and assist in disposing of the body, after he had deprived it of life. Having arranged every thing relative to the bloody business, Acasto met Torquo, a little after twelve o'clock, at the foot of a private staircase, that led to the pannel, with the secret of which that old villain was acquainted, and who had conducted Montano to it the preceding night.

A few moments previous to their entering the chamber, our heroine was awakened, by a loud, shrill, and wild whistle, which was succeeded by a low moaning noise; in an agony of terror, she called Louisa, but to rouse her was almost impossible, and after repeating the attempt twice, she desisted. While she lay trembling in terror, the

panel was cautiously removed, and the following instant, the lamp's feeble rays discovered the lengthened shadow of a man on the floor, who advanced towards her bed, but, when within a few paces, remained a moment motionless, as if listening ; shortly after, he turned towards the aperture, moved the table, and beckoned to an assistant, who approached ; she then heard Acasto say, " they sleep sound, do you retire and close the panel, while I close in everlasting sleep, the eyes of Signiora Louisa ; should you hear shrieks, and apprehend alarm, you can return in time to prevent confusion. If Lady Alexena consents, there is little more to be done, if not—to the cell next Velasco's."

" Sure you told me all this before," said a voice, which Alexena recognized as that of Torquo, " strike home !—let the blow be sure !—make as little noise as possible ; and before I go, ascertain which of the beds she is in." Acasto

complied, and first examined Alexena's, who shut her eyes, and breathed hard, as if in sound sleep. He hastily dropped the curtain, and with quickness raised his lanthorn over the other, where his victim lay, tranquil and unconscious of approaching death. A glance was sufficient for Acasto, who then softly retreated, and in the same low whisper, communicated his discovery. "Louisa is next us," he said. "That is fortunate," replied the other.—"Feel for her heart, and I wish you a steady hand. It grows late, and there is much to be done, so no musing—despatch her quickly." Torquo now retired; but was recalled for the last time, and after some further indistinct whispering, our affrighted heroine heard the fatal pannel resume its position, and saw Acasto draw nigh, grasp his stiletto, and lift the hanging drapery. She now endeavoured to scream; but extreme terror deprived her of utterance; her tongue was as motionless as her body; and she lay watching the

relentless villain, who had then passed his hand along the bed-clothes, and felt for Louisa's heart; but it beat so gently, that almost a minute elapsed ere he discovered it. There remained little else to be done; her life was not worth a moment's purchase. Acasto pressed his knee to the bed side, to give force and elasticity to the meditated blow, and raised his arm to strike. Nature could no more——Alexena groaned—the assassin started, and impatiently turned to ascertain the cause, and that instant his throat was grasped by a hand as cold and as powerful as the bony one of death. His sight was blasted by a spectre indescribably horrid; its height was gigantic; its figure, lank and bony, covered with long black hair; its face, decayed and putrid; its eyes glared like glow worms; its temples were bound with a bloody handkerchief, which seemed to sparkle in livid flames; maggots crept forth from the foam which surrounded its mouth, and sported in its eye-brows;

its breath was hot and pestilential ; the hands and feet, armed with long nails ; the waist surrounded by the raw hide of an animal, and the remainder of the body naked ; one hand was armed with a short red-hot iron ; with the other, it clasped the almost strangled assassin ; then, with a yell which shook the castle, it stamped his pale forehead with the fiery metal, and dashed him, shrieking, on the floor. The monstrous phantom then shook his dagger over him, in a threatening posture, gave a second yell, more terrible than the first, bounded against the adjacent wall, whose solid stone-work rent asunder, and received him within its bosom.

Louisa started from her sleep, on the first appearance of the spectre ; but instantly fainted, and its second cry recalled her to life. Alexena remained torpid with horror ; she had witnessed the entire of the recent scene ; and when the apparition vanished, her fears were renewed by the expected entrance

of Torquo; but his shrieks were also distinguishable, and Acasto had yet to suffer another horrible rencounter; for the moment he awakened from the trance to which his fears had reduced him, he saw the pannel move, and staggered towards it, for the purpose of availing himself of his servant's arms, as he was unable to walk, without the greatest difficulty; then judge his accumulated horror, on beholding the ghastly form of a female—a dagger sticking in her side, from which the blood seemed to flow afresh; in the passage behind her, Torquo extended at full length, his torch blazing beside him; and, in the distance, the colossal form of a black knight, grinning horribly, with his sabre raised in a threatening posture. Acasto saw, groaned, and again fell senseless. The female approached the beds; a door flew open close to that of Alexena, through which she passed, and then shut with excessive violence. Again it opened, and Torquo appeared, pale, agitated, and

almost convulsed with terror. He lifted the body of his master from the floor, who slowly began to revive, but the former not having strength, was obliged to drag him from the chamber. Again the pannel closed, and many minutes elapsed before our suffering heroine or Louisa found the power of articulation. The latter, however, left her bed, and crept into Alexena's, where she had not been a moment, until they were again alarmed by a rustling noise at the door, which a large, rough, and shaggy dog forced open, and shortly after, jumped upon the bed, to their great terror. Fear, however, was succeeded by joy, when they heard a low, plaintive voice call—"Lion!—Lion!" but Lion would not stir, and in despite of Alexena's struggles, he licked her face and hands. She, fortunately, recognized the faithful animal, and chid him gently, until Clarissa entered, and pulled him from the bed; then our heroine became angry with herself for her recent terrors, on finding that Don

Miguel's sister was the identical apparition that had passed through the chamber a few minutes before, and who had terrified Acasto so much. She was attended by a pretty peasant girl, with a tray of refreshments and cordials, which Carracci had ordered, who was greatly alarmed, lest her appearance as a spectre, might have been attended by fatal consequences; but on Alexena's mentioning the hairy savage, Clarissa became terrified, and said she could not account for it otherwise, than by supposing Providence had sent some dreadful messenger to deter Acasto from his bloody purpose. "But I think," she continued, "that you may calculate on one certainty, which is, that Don Philip will never repeat his horrible visit, and you have reason to be thankful to heaven for its peculiar kindness, in sending Carracci to your assistance, who, by some extraordinary means, became acquainted with his intentions, and adopted that stratagem, which alarmed both so much.

Lord Mortimer is with Belzo at present, in the subterranean chambers, deliberating on what will be most likely to ensure your future safety. His servant, Rourke, is there also; and as I am a great favourite with Lion, he has been induced to follow me here, where I intend to remain during the night."

Clarissa now secured the pannel with a small iron, which she had procured for the purpose, and they then conversed until the return of day; but when Lion became restless, Alexena was greatly alarmed, lest his whining should be overheard, and lead to a discovery, the result of which would be inevitable destruction. Clarissa was, therefore, obliged to retire much sooner than she would otherwise have done; but left our heroine and Louisa, if not perfectly composed, at least confident that Carracci was zealously watchful, and, if necessary, would sacrifice his life to insure their safety.

CHAP. XIII.

“ ————— Ere the bat hath flown
 His cloister'd flight ; ere to black Hecate's summons,
 The shard-borne beetle, with his drowsy hums,
 Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done
 A deed of dreadful note.”

SHAKSPEARE.

IT was past two o'clock in the afternoon before Margaret made her appearance with breakfast ; but apologized for her delay, by saying she could not steal a moment from Don Philip's chamber, who was so extremely ill, that a physician had been sent for. “ He has been in a state of delirium the entire of the morning,” said Margaret, “ and Father Montano says it is a fever, brought on by a severe cold. Torquo is much in the same situation ; Fernandez is absent on particular business, and confusion seems the order of the day. The soldiers are drunk, and are squabbling with the servants ; Williams has pounded two or three of the most ungovernable into a jelly, and if my

lord is not better in the evening, I fear there will be murder committed. Larco is the only domestic in the castle that can be depended on, or is any thing like a Christian; but he is always moping about those solitary rooms like a ghost, and I am certain, if Don Philip finds him in the vicinity of this chamber, he will make one of him in good earnest."

"What can he possibly be about?" demanded Alexena, evidently alarmed.

"I know not, Donna; but you may rely on it he is not mischievous, and as to you, I am certain he would serve you with all his heart, if opportunity offered. I met him just now, and he desired me to caution you, to keep your chamber all this day, or at least until such time as Fernandez returns. Indeed, I almost forgot, that Montano is to call on you with a message from Don Philip, to the same effect, as he is aware, the soldiers have acted very badly those some days past."

“Then, why not punish them?” inquired Louisa, “or turn them from his service.”

“The latter he has resolved on,” replied Margaret, “when Fernandez can procure others.”

Here they were interrupted, by a loud knocking at the anti chamber, and Margaret hastened to ascertain the cause. When she was gone, Alexena said, “this is the monk, who comes for the purpose of learning how far we are acquainted with the occurrences of last night; therefore, conceal every circumstance which may induce him to conceive we know aught of it; and Acasto will be convinced we are protected by supernatural agents, which should he once firmly believe, nations would not induce him to repeat his late atrocious attempt, lest it might prove fatal. You can evade his questions, and confuse him, by soliciting an explanation of the reasons which has led him to imagine we were disturbed last

night ; that is, in case I am right in my conjectures, and that he has actually come for such a purpose." Alexena was perfectly correct ; the monk had been sent expressly to hear their account of the recent transaction, and to learn whether they knew the extent of Acasto's intentions. On his entry, he endeavoured to read their thoughts, by a deep scrutinizing look—but they were prepared, and he was defeated. Their minds being perfectly collected, were proof against his most wily strokes of cunning ; and though his efforts to obtain his desired information were admirably ingenious ; yet, the vacant stare of Louisa, or the wondering gaze of Alexena, deceived this father of deceit ; and, in the course of their conversation, the former archly inquired, " had he been wandering the preceding night ? I suppose you have," she sneeringly said, " and while on your ramble, determined to bestow your *fatherly benediction* on us—your daughters ; but found the lazy colts unwilling

to admit your reverence ; nor could your most earnest prayers, prevail on the iron-hearted rogues, to allow you to steal even one glance.”

Though Montano knew Louisa mocked him, he yet felt pleased, that Acasto had not been discovered ; but threatened to confine her in a dungeon for her impertinence, and then hastened to Don Philip's chamber. As he traversed the south gallery, he had time to reflect on the late extraordinary occurrences, and became almost convinced, that Acasto had seen a spectre, or was deranged. “ If the latter,” he said, “ Torquo must be mad also ; if the former, it accounts at once for the ladies not knowing any thing of the matter ; but the marks on his forehead were never placed there by a shadow ; there is treachery in the castle, and I will find it out.” Influenced by this idea, he hurried to his friend's apartment, where he relieved his mind, by assuring him, that his visit to Alexena's chamber, was entirely unknown ; and

that both her and Louisa were totally unconscious of any of the dreadful circumstances attending it.

The moment Acasto had regained his chamber, he sent Torquo for the monk, to whom he related with minute exactness, each particular circumstance, and dwelt, with horror, on the description of the dreadful spectre he had seen ; but the pain of his head was forgotten, until his steward began to curse the hour in which he had accompanied him. “ My bones,” said the old ruffian, “ are reduced to an olio ; the marrow, blood, and splinters, all jumbled together ; and my shoulders are reduced to jelly ; but I would rather be pounded in a mortar, than have another interview with the lady Clarissa.”

“ Who ? who ? ” demanded Acasto, in the utmost agitation.

“ Donna del Harco, I affirm ; and exactly as I left her, under the rock of ——— ; ”

“ Hush, hush ! ” said Montano ; while every joint trembled. “ Do you

not hear a moaning noise in the adjoining corridor?"

"No,"—replied Acasto, who then grew deadly pale; "I trust, it is only the wind."

"Let us pray," observed the monk."

"No mockery, I beseech you," faltered Don Philip, "lest we call down the immediate vengeance of heaven; Torquo retire, and order Margaret to rise, and send refreshments, as my confessor will remain with me the remainder of the night." Torquo reluctantly obeyed, and with difficulty hobbled from the chamber; while Montano joyfully acceded to Acasto's wish, as he was extremely unwilling to encounter the solitude of his own apartment. Thus were these abandoned men haunted by the terrors of a guilty conscience; their own shadows, or the noise of their footsteps, threw them into agony. And so may it ever be with the merciless wretch, who would wilfully, and remorselessly destroy the peace of mind, or daringly

raise his hand against the life of his fellow-being.

Acasto felt considerable pleasure on beholding the first tints of returning day, as they, in a great degree, dispelled the vapours with which fear and darkness had oppressed him ; and on reflection, was not displeased that Louisa yet lived ; but her he could not think of without horror, and determined never to permit the renewal of the attempt against her life. Having thus made a kind of compromise with his conscience, he ordered the physician to be paid handsomely on his arrival, and dismissed, as he resolved neither to admit, or be seen by him.

Fernandez returned early the following morning, and restored order in the castle ; but Don Philip was unable to leave his apartment, or was unwilling to do so, until the wound on his temples should be quite well. During the period of his confinement, which was some weeks, he had many long con-

ferences with the monk, and several couriers, who were constantly employed in conveying intelligence to and from Madrid; many strangers had been brought prisoners to the castle, but with Acasto's health, returned the persecution of our heroine, who the former, for some cogent reason, resolved to sacrifice, if she persisted in refusing to become his wife. Louisa, at this time, observed numbers of workmen constantly employed in putting the fortifications in the best possible repair, with all other preparations that are necessary, where a garrison intends to make a desperate resistance; and informed Alexena that she had little doubt of the government having resolved to punish Acasto for his many and repeated outrages, but whom he determined to resist. The idea of being exposed to all the horrors of a regular siege, inflicted no slight pain on the susceptible mind of Alexena, while the number that must necessarily fall in the conflict, with the conse-

sequences of the probable result, rendered her miserable, and she watched the progress of the works with anxious terror, devoting almost an hour of every evening to the inspection of what had been done during the day. When every thing had been completed, and the workmen discharged, she ventured to the ramparts, attended by Louisa, and found new guns mounted, with other considerable alterations, which rendered the castle formidable as a fortress; and on regaining the corridor leading to her chamber, the latter detained her some time, in order to point out the peculiar beauty of the landscape, from a noble gothic window, which commanded a fine view, and overlooked the deep ravine below.—The sun had gilt, with golden beams, the towering projections of the neighbouring rocks, and the small western turrets that sat perched on the gloomy ramparts, nodding to the deep, which lashed, with foamy wrath, their solid

foundations, while the tops of the cliffs reflected the red glare on the tall pine, as they rose from the glens, presenting to the imagination a blazing forest; but adding a deeper shade to the distant vallies, from which the growl of the wolf, or shrill cry of the chamois, were distinguishable. As the dark drapery of evening fell fast round the scene, the wind moaned through the groaning woods, and swept the dizzy crags and rustling foilage, with rising impetuosity. The clouds rolled rapidly along, the lightning glared in the distance, while the sighing breeze stole through the long-deserted galleries and neglected corridors, mournfully announcing an approaching storm. Alexena enjoyed the scene; it was suited to the tone of her mind; yet she beheld its accumulating terrors with awe, as the consequences promised to be fatal, particularly in those tremendous mountains, where the weary pilgrim, or lone traveller, are so often bewildered; where they frequently fall headlong

from some rude cliff, or walk, unconsciously, into the lair of the savage beasts, rendered furious by hunger, and who prey on their agonized forms.

There was a path which led to a distant monastery, and wound through the craggy heights : this road attracted the attention of our heroine and Louisa, who watched the gathering tempest, and anxiously bent their eyes on the fainty pathway, in order to ascertain whether any luckless wanderer traversed its barren windings, unprotected from the pitiless pelting of the storm. The rain fell in torrents, and pattered, with amazing fury, against the stony heads of the proud buttresses of Santa Marco. The blue and livid lightning blazed in fiery splendour, now partially revealing the dark outline of the mountains, next instant illuminating forests, from which their arrowy flames plunged, hissing, into the deep morass, or rushed along the ground, scorching, with blighting fury, each tender plant, and prying,

with burning glances, into the gloomy cavities of the projecting cliffs. The storm's impetuosity became irresistible, and shook the strongest towers. Large branches of the adjacent trees were rent from the parent stem, and swept through the air; cataracts dashed, with foaming madness, over the hoary and weather-beaten heads of ancient rocks, while every succeeding blast carried away a portion of their late verdant covering; the sea birds screamed with terror; the wolf gnashed his teeth in idle rage, and slunk to his den; the fox forgot his cunning in his fears, and gladly sheltered in his earth. All vestiges of nature were lost, while chaos and confusion governed the frantic elements. Alexena shrunk from the contemplation of the scene, deeply impressed with the idea of that Almighty power, which could hush the roaring wind into peace, and was mentally invoking his protection, when a tremendous flash illumined the rocky path, and discovered a number of

horsemen riding furiously down its projecting sides, and apparently approaching the castle. Again they were distinguishable, by the lightning's vivid glare, and again lost in darkness. Loud whistles and shouts were intermingled with the blast, and were distinctly borne by the storm, to the ears of our affrighted heroine, who recognized them, not as signals of distress, but rather of rude and boisterous merriment. She turned to Louisa, to beg an explanation; but was answered by a voice behind them, who said, "these are the troops of Belzo Carracci, returning from plunder." They both screamed; but on observing Margaret, were ashamed of their weakness, and apologized.

"Dear ladies," said that affectionate creature, "it is I who should beg pardon for my unlucky intrusion; may I hope it is only the storm that has awakened such painful fears, and increased your timidity."

“Indeed you may,” replied Louisa; “but now allow me to inquire why you affirm that those horsemen are Carracci’s band.”

“Because my long residence here has made me familiar with the signal whistle you have just heard; and it is generally used, either to collect the troop, or to express their joy on the success of some enterprise, such as the destruction of a village, murdering some great nobleman, or carrying off a lovely damsel. But, hark!—oh, holy virgin!—the castle is attacked by them.—Behold their savage countenances, when partially revealed by the fire of their guns. We need not expect mercy, if they succeed;—fly, Donna Alexena, fly to your chamber, as you may be shot, if you remain here.”

Volley now succeeded volley, in quick succession; torches blazed on every part of the ramparts, and the cries of the soldiery were drowned in the noise of the cannon. Curses and shouts filled each interval, while a most horrid

scene of confusion reigned in the hall and courts of the castle.

Alexena hurried to the gallery which overlooked the hall, and she had scarce arrived, ere she saw Montano rush into it, with a glittering faulchion in one hand, and a torch in the other; his voice rolled like thunder through the arcades, as he vociferated—"We are attacked by the king's troops—massacre all prisoners—and if the enemy scale the walls, off with Alexena's head—she is the cause of this misfortune, but never shall triumph in victory. Away, slaves; and hurl destruction on the foe!" The monk now rushed into the thickest of the fight; the castle shook with the tremendous fire, while each succeeding moment, the wounded soldiers were carried into the hall, groaning with anguish. Cries of "victory" now, and "treachery" the next instant, were clearly distinguishable; and our heroine, with Louisa, remained trembling in the gallery, awaiting the event, Not

many minutes, however, had elapsed, before Acasto ordered the firing to cease, and the torches to be extinguished. "We are fighting the plundering bands of Carracci," he exclaimed, "and our lights serve to point us out. Where is the traitor who first gave this false alarm, that I may sacrifice him?" One of Acasto's savage domestics, named Juan, said it was a cavalier, who had been captured the preceding day, and offered to bring the culprit before him. Instantly, shouts of revenge, and demands for vengeance, were made by the infuriated soldiery, and Juan hastened to conduct his prisoner into Don Philip's presence, while Alexena became anxious to see the stranger, and if any violence was offered, she resolved to save him, or, at least, endeavour to do so. There was, at this moment, a deep silence, every eye being turned towards the passage that led to the dungeons; but the next, the rising murmur of countless voices, announced his approach. Montano stood

with vulture eyes, ready to feast on blood; and the moment the noble cavalier entered, he frantically shrieked—“It is Mortimer, by heaven! down with him—hew him to pieces!” Our heroine heard, saw, screamed, and wildly flew towards the hall. The monk now fired at his foe, who stooped, and the ball having passed him, he snatched up a wooden rail, with which he defended himself from numberless blows that were aimed at his breast. Larco and Fernandez were foremost; but an attentive observer would have perceived their intentions were not hostile, as their swords received the repeated strokes which were intended for the devoted victim of the monk’s malice.

During the conflict, Alexena vainly endeavoured to reach the hall; however, a door at the extremity of the gallery preventing the possibility of her passing that way, she desisted in despair; but on turning, was surprised to see the object of her solicitude enter at the

opposite end, and turn into a corridor which led to the centre of the castle ; as his pursuers were quite nigh, she hastened to mislead them, and met Montano breathing revenge ; at once he conceived she had concealed her lover, and pursued the direction from which he had observed her approach. By this fortunate circumstance, the stranger gained ground ; but in a few moments, he was hunted by an host of assassins, led by Acasto, and the cry of “ here ! here ! ” almost deprived our heroine of life, who now frantically called on heaven and Carracci, as she rushed forward to the scene of carnage. The unfortunate stranger was overtaken in the passage leading to the library, and defended himself with surprising bravery, while the humane Fernandez again sought to save him, and it is probable he would have escaped, had not the furious Montano arrived at this unfortunate juncture. Acasto was struggling to ward off the blows, and re-

peatedly shouted, "don't slay him—take him alive:" but his injunctions were disregarded when the monk pressed forward, who commanded the crowd not to impede each other, and the combat could not last more than a few moments. The door of the chamber was now flung open by Alexena, who had rapidly pressed through the armoury, for the purpose, hoping to save her lover by that means; however, the die was cast; Montano cut the frail wood, which had so long protected him, asunder, but received a violent blow on the temples from the remainder, which stunned him. Acasto then seized his sword-arm, and shrieked, "save him, save him!" "Hell gape for him!" cried the bloody monk, as he levelled a pistol, which instantly sped a fatal bullet through his head, and he fell lifeless into the arms of our fainting heroine.

"Oh, cursed hour!" exclaimed Acasto, "this is not Mortimer, it is my neighbour Cerasco, who chose to die, rather

than beg his life from an old enemy. Bear his body to the state chamber, and there let it receive every honour; then carry this wretched, insensible, infatuated girl to her apartment." Louisa and Margaret now appeared, and our heroine was committed to their care, while the soldiers bore the body to the apartment, mentioned by Don Philip, and Montano retired to dress the wound he had received, breathing imprecations against the blind fury which so repeatedly led him to the commission of murder; but totally regardless of the opinion of those who had been witnesses; and being lost to every feeling of remorse, he consoled himself with the idea, that the man whom he had slain, was obnoxious to Acasto.

Shortly after Alexena revived, Louisa informed her, that Don Cerasco had been mistaken for Mortimer, and had fallen in his stead; but she found it impossible to convince her, until Margaret offered to conduct them to the room where the body lay; this;

however, was unnecessary, as a little reflection pointed out the folly which had led her to believe, the possibility of his lordship's being a prisoner, as nothing could be more unlikely. Carracci was his friend and guardian, never suffering him to leave his cavern, or the castle, no, not for a moment; yet it was strange, that he had not entered the latter to her knowledge, for the last ten days, and it was a circumstance which gave birth to many doubts of Belzo's fidelity. This night was passed in vain conjectures as to the cause, and day returned without either Alexena or Louisa's being able to form any decided opinion on the painful subject. Morning brought with it new cares—new sorrows. Acasto, irritated and enraged at the events of the preceding night, ordered Alexena to attend him in the library, where she was obliged to follow Margaret, accompanied by Louisa. On their entering, Don Philip was leaning on his hand, his face pale and thoughtfully expressive; and they had been in the room

some moments, before he was aware of his inattention, but on perceiving them, apologized, and led our heroine to a seat. Montano lay in a recess, extended on a sofa, his cowl drawn close round his features, through which his eyes were scarce distinguishable, and was carelessly tossing over the leaves of a book, apparently searching for some particular passage. Louisa stood behind Alexena's chair, while Margaret slowly and reluctantly retired. After a painful pause, Acasto reverted to the confusion of the preceding night; lamented the fall of Cerasco; appealed to both ladies, whether he had not used his utmost exertions to save the unfortunate man, when he believed him to be Lord Mortimer; and then expatiated on the continued state of agitation and mental suffering, which Alexena subjected herself to, in consequence of grasping the vain hope of again seeing her lover; he proceeded by saying, "that it was absolutely necessary to his own peace, and that of his household,

that these alarms should be finally suppressed, and that this desirable point could only be effected by our heroine's consenting to unite her fate to his." He concluded this speech with an avowal of his passion, and many promises of lasting attachment.

When he had ceased, Alexena replied with a firmness which astonished all present, by saying, "that empires could not purchase her consent, nor tortures extort it; she could not even say, that she felt grateful for Don Philip's attachment, as she was convinced, his every word had been studied, and sprung from views that were as mean as they were base; she valued not his resentment, nor did she fear death; her peace of mind had been continually preyed on, by the conviction, that the life of her friend was exposed to every whim or burst of resentment, which influenced a being, whose form alone entitled him to the name of human; murder and revenge

had been his favourite play things ; by him religion was treated with derision ; and more than once, he dared to brave his God, at his very altar. He had the power, and seldom wanted the inclination, to insult her, and never had been denied such permission, by the man who now solicited her hand, and for whom she could not help feeling contempt and abhorrence. Her spirits were almost wearied out in the detestable controversy, and were it not impious, she could not only hate her tyrant, but beg of heaven to hide her from him in the tomb ; she cautioned him not to put too much confidence in his strength, not to provoke an offended Deity, to pour on him the vials of his wrath ; nor by a repetition of monstrous abuses, and a cruel, hopeless persecution of herself, expose his life to the laws of his offended country, and his soul to everlasting torments. “ Learn,” said she, as she rose to withdraw, “ learn to fear Him who wields the living thunder ; your know-

ledge of his Almighty power, should awaken you to a sense of those enormous crimes, which cry for vengeance. Yes; I see your brow tells you can kill my body; but were I dead, your dominion ends; it cannot extend farther.—Nay, threaten not!—When you send your assassin, I shall point to my heart, and you may then triumph, if you will.”

Acasto's looks were extremely expressive during the time he listened to Alexena's spirited reply; but the latter part of it having deprived him of every shadow of hope, from gentle means, he resolved to resort to harsh ones, and to try whether she was proof against them to that extent which her last words implied. Thus resolved, he frowned, and, in a voice that shook the apartment, ordered Alexena to stay, and hear his final sentiments. She, however, refused, conceiving he was about to insult her with a repetition of his late detestable avowal; but on her moving towards the door, he sprung

forward to prevent her, when Louisa, who had not ventured a single observation, now glided between him and it, and in a tone that bid defiance to every threat, ordered him to desist. “Behold,” she said, “this murderous dagger, which is encrusted with the blood of the martyred Clarissa—advance one pace farther, and I’ll bury it in your bosom; while, for your confessor, I have the pistol by which Cerasco fell.—Ah! ah! you cowards! can a woman scare you both?”

Louisa seemed inspired; she scarce touched the solid floor; her soul fluttered on her tongue, lending it words to fright those ruffians, whose strength was blighted by her bravery, and she was suffered to lead our heroine off, without farther molestation.

In less than an hour, Don Philip wrote a note to Alexena, and sent it by Margaret, in which he promised pardon for her late offence, and everlasting love and constancy, should she

Bless him with her hand ; but if not, he vowed his determination of availing himself of her helplessness, and after rendering her miserable, would then deliver her into the hands of Montano, to be treated by him with all the rigour, and all the cruelty, that she was aware he knew how to inflict. “ He shall,” said Acasto, “ have full powers to subdue your proud, rebellious, stubborn spirit ; yet I will allow this night for reflection ; to-morrow decides your fate. You are to consider whether it is better to enjoy all the goods of fortune, or yield your last sigh in the noxious vapours of a filthy dungeon, where your beauty shall fade, neglected and unpitied ; and, at length, sink into an obscure grave, unknown, without a single friend to shed a tear, or pile over your wasted form, the smallest portion even of unhallowed earth.” Alexena read this scroll in no enviable state of mind, and, in a short time, became so faint, that Louisa endeavoured to persuade her to retire to bed ; but she

resolved not to let her feelings overpower her fortitude, as by giving them unbridled sway, she would deprive herself of the possibility of resisting Acasto ; and, therefore, entreated her cousin to walk with her on the ramparts, where, she trusted, the air would revive her.

While they continued walking, one of the soldiers approached, from whom Louisa required an explanation of the cause of the late attack, to which he replied, that “ the troops of Beizo Carracci had fired a few vollies at the centinels, as they passed the castle, which was returned by them, and shortly after, Acasto ordered Fernandez to fire the cannon towards the spot, which caused the ensuing confusion. It was Juan, ladies, who is always doing mischief, that led my lord to believe Don Cerasco was Lord Mortimer, because he had been a servant of his about two years ago, and was turned from his place, in disgrace, for malpractices. Revenge prompted him to take advan-

stage of the alarm, and cause his old master to be murdered, which, unfortunately has happened."

"Had the robbers any artillery?" demanded Alexena.

"Oh! no, Donna; it is impossible to drag cannon over those mountains."

"Then how did Don Philip contrive to bring those here?"

"By sea, lady, and then hoisted them on the walls, by the assistance of a windlass."

Fernandez now appeared, and the ladies pursued their ramble. They strolled on until they reached a small grass-grown court, long since disused, where they stood remarking the regular beauty of the adjacent towers. While they yet conversed, a soldier approached, and when within a few paces, looked cautiously round, then made signs that he wished to speak, or communicate something. Louisa advanced, and asked what he required. "I come, Donna, to inform you, Lord Mortimer

has friends in the castle, who have admitted him; and if Donna Alexena attends this night in the armoury, she will meet him there."

"How can you convince us of the truth?"

"I swear by the name of Belzo," replied the soldier.

"I now understand you," observed Louisa.

"Then you will both be in the armoury at midnight."

"Certainly," said Alexena; "but as the monk approaches, you had better retire."

The centinel drew his cap over his face, retreated with all possible speed, and reached a small arched door-way that led into an outer court, through which he vanished before Montano came up, who appeared almost breathless.

"So, ladies, you have been tampering with the soldiers, to assist you in the old project of escape; have you

been so monstrous clever as to prevail, and entertain well-founded hopes of success?"

"How much we should feel obliged," replied Louisa, ironically, "for the interest you always so kindly take in our affairs! Do now, *dear father*, oblige us by taking yourself off, that we may get rid of your most detestable company."

Montano gnashed his teeth, but was too much enraged to reply; while she continued—"Nay, I beseech your reverend impertinence to withdraw, and when within that cell, to which, no doubt, you are about to retire, remember us in your prayers, and I shall think of you in *mine*."

"Perdition seize you, impudent baggage!" vociferated Montano, "I will, this instant, toss you from the ramparts!" He then rushed forward; but Louisa coolly drew forth a pistol, which she presented at him, and then said—"I doubt whether you now recollect

your threat; but a ball in the head may refresh your memory, if you have already forgotten the purport of it.— Say, shall I fire?”

The monk was petrified with amazement, and stood irresolute, while Alexena remained a speechless observer of this scene. Again the spirit of Louisa was roused; and, in a voice of commanding dignity, she ordered Montano from her presence.—She was armed, and he obeyed: twice he turned, and gazed on her figure; but we must forbear the wish we have to describe his countenance: the reader, however, already acquainted with his character, may form a much juster idea of it, than any feeble attempt of ours could give. When he was no longer discernible, Louisa's assumed courage fled; and she was so much exhausted by the late effort, that she sunk insensible at Alexena's feet, who now forgot her own fears, and was about to hasten for assistance, when Don Philip appeared. He raised her in his arms, and when respiration

returned, assisted her to the castle, where he ordered Margaret to treat her with every possible attention, saying, he would dispense with our heroine's presence at dinner, in consequence of the indisposition of her friend; and if ever she felt grateful to him, it was at that moment; while he, having observed the expression of her countenance, resolved, if possible, to improve the good opinion which, it seemed to say, she entertained, and shortly after withdrew.

Louisa's illness was neither alarming nor serious, and after the lapse of a few hours, she appeared most anxious for the approaching interview, as there was a possibility they might escape that night; therefore, at the appointed hour, they hastened through the mazy windings which lay between their apartments and the armoury. On entering its gloom, they held their lamps high, and waved them round, that their light might dispel the dark shadows of the adjacent pillars, and shew whether

friends or enemies lurked behind them; but though their rays did not penetrate far into the dusky obscurity, yet they partially revealed a flitting figure, who, on seeing them, instantly crouched, and remained motionless. Alexena said, "It is Mortimer!—let us advance." Louisa caught her arm, and whispered, "No! we are betrayed; behold that gigantic armour to the left; this moment a man has glided behind it, whom I recognize as Hugo; and as his master cannot be far off, therefore, let us retire carelessly, that we may lead them to believe, we are unsuspecting of any intended injury." She then gave the lamp to Alexena, and cautiously prepared the pistol which had been concealed in the girdle of her robe; but had scarce effected it, before her companion screamed, and on turning, she beheld Juan approach on tip-toe with a drawn dagger, whose intent being manifest, she instantly fired, and he fell: Montano, on seeing this, rushed from the opposite side, followed

by Hugo, their eyes blazing with crime and cruelty. Louisa now dashed the lamp from Alexena's hands, who, being overpowered by fear, fainted; and then, availing herself of the darkness, fled for her life, she knew not whither, while her footsteps were closely pressed on by her blood-thirsty pursuers. Her only hope was in fleetness; she fled from corridor to corridor; from chamber to chamber; from gallery to gallery; up one stair-case and down another, until she had traversed a vast number of apartments; but, both her breath and strength being exhausted, she was obliged to slacken her pace; and at length ventured to pause and listen;—all was silence, and she trusted she had outrun her pursuers. "Wretched Louisa! they are within a few paces, ready to plunge their merciless daggers into your panting bosom." The room she was then in appeared to be spacious, but the gloom rendered it almost impossible to distinguish objects. Yet this, she fondly hoped,

would prove a favourable circumstance, as its darkness sheltered, while its echo promised to aid her in discovering the approaching foe. Her conjectures were right, she heard the cautious tread of her hunters, who were already in the chamber ; but, after a low and very indistinct whisper, they separated, and apparently retired through different doors. In a few moments she ventured forward, and having incautiously passed the window, her figure was observed, and her assassins then turned to execute their vile purpose ; while she, unmindful of the necessity of silence, began to pray in a low voice :—“ Oh ! my God,” she said, “ save me, I beseech thee, from their grasp, and receive my thanks for this short respite. They have retired, and I trust that another night is to be added to my life, as to-morrow I may be able to inform ——.” She paused on hearing the suppressed breathings of a man, who almost touched her, and shrunk back, but found her retrograde motion was dis-

covered. She now recognized the forms of those savages, and conceiving herself without a chance of escape, exclaimed, "Strike your devoted victim!" but was that instant firmly clasped in the gigantic arms of Carracci; who, while she screamed, sunk with her through the floor. Montano then bounced forward with a tiger's spring to strike his prey, and plunged his dagger deep into Hugo, who he mistook for the innocent object of his malice, and laid this vile agent of crime dead at his feet.

It was some time before the monk discovered this fatal mistake, who, with a torrent of execrations, reviled the folly of his wretched attendant, for approaching so unguardedly within his reach; at a time too, when it was impossible to ascertain his figure. The scarf which Hugo had procured for the purpose of striking Louisa with supernatural terrors, caused his destruction, as the dusky light being sufficiently strong to shew its whiteness, led his

murderer to believe, he was Louisa. Montano did not at first imagine that Hugo was past recovery, but when he laid his hand on his rough beard, and found he neither made a reply to his repeated entreaties, or the slightest motion to obey him, he became convinced of the dreadful certainty, and hurried to his apartment to procure a lamp, that he might bury him in the cemetery, relying on his ingenuity for some plausible tale, which would account for his absence. The lamp that he had brought from his chamber was extinguished by Hugo, on the first appearance of the ladies in the armoury, and there the monk determined it should remain, as worlds would not tempt him to seek it. "Alexena," he said, "must have long since alarmed the attendants, who have found Juan's body, and for whose death she has accounted; therefore, if I am caught before Don Philip can interfere, the probability is, they will knock me on the head, for the attempt on this

Louisa; who, may the devil fly away with, if he has not already done so; but she certainly was killed, for what less than a death-blow could produce the yell she gave? Oh! it must be so; she has staggered a few paces, then fell; and I, not having laid my hand on her when I stooped, idly conceived she escaped."

Having thus, in this soliloquy, arranged the circumstance to his satisfaction, his mind became composed, and when he had procured a light, he proceeded to the tragical spot where his ill-fated attendant lay weltering in his blood, and by whose stiffened hand, an instrument of destruction was still firmly grasped, and whose poisoned point had deeply perforated the flooring of the chamber. Montano stood leaning in horror over the pale and gristly visage of the breathless corpse, and when he laid the lamp on the bloody boards, in order to lift it, he could not avoid feeling the stings of remorse. He was a murderer—an

object of universal hatred, contempt, and detestation; and although, in this instance, he did not intend to kill his servant, was not the dagger by which he fell, raised with the intention of committing, if possible, a still more horrible crime? But such feelings were quickly stifled in his bosom; he was overwhelmed in iniquity, and, in a few seconds, relapsed into all his original depravity.

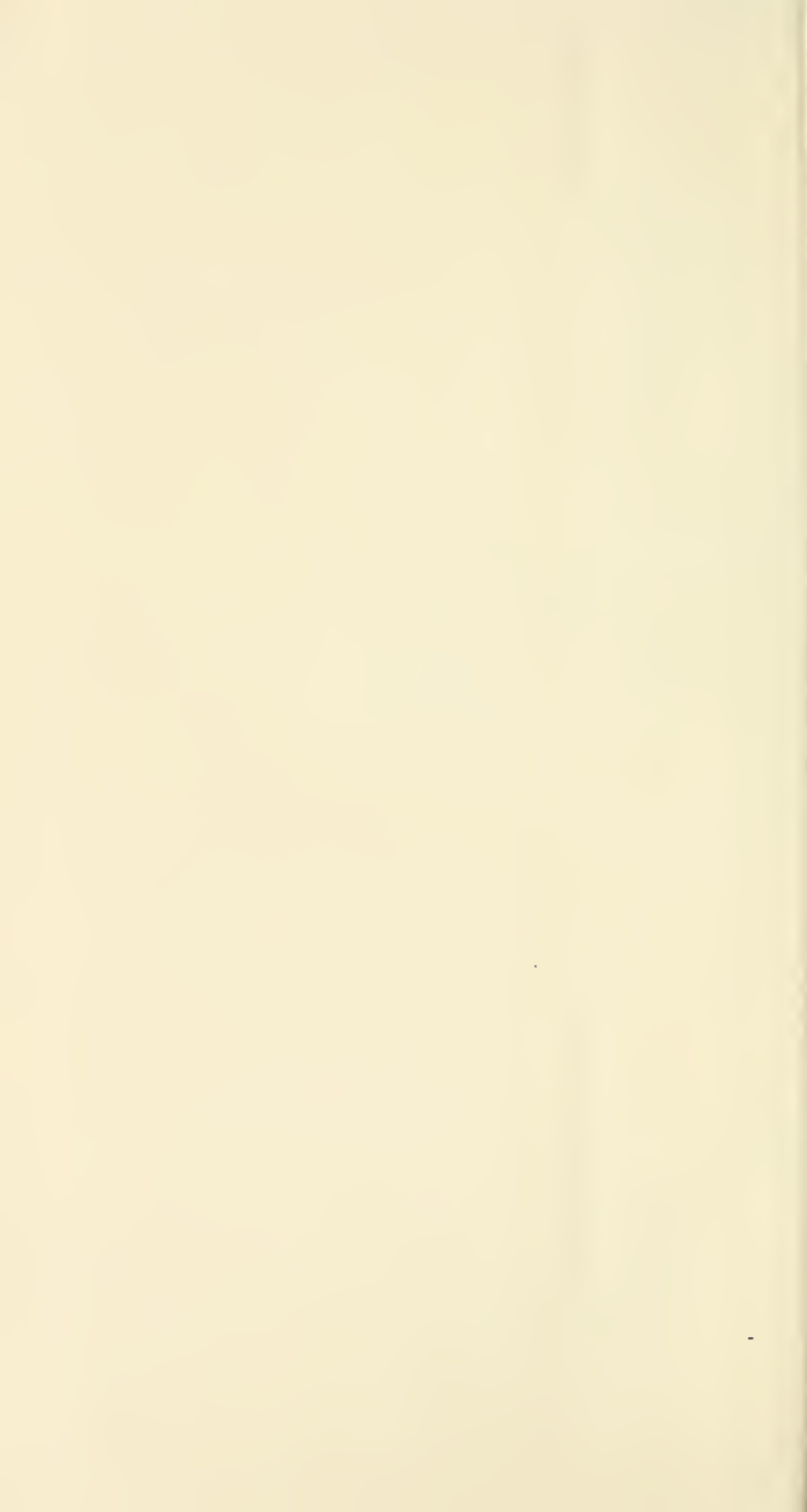
While endeavouring to raise the black and livid form of Hugo on his shoulders, he gnashed his teeth, in the agony of disappointed revenge, and was many moments before he effected his purpose; but having, at length, accomplished it, he grasped his lamp, then left the gory stage for the burial ground, and moved along, with all the haste the weight of his burthen would permit him. Having now and then stopped to listen, he more than once conceived he heard the mournful notes of the organ, which created sensations it is impossible to describe, and of which

few can have an idea. He was then in the dreary corridor of an antiquated castle, stealing towards a grave-yard, bearing the body of a man who had fallen by his hand, when both were in the act of perpetrating a deadly, cowardly, vile, and bloody deed, at the bare mention of which, human nature shudders. The fall of Hugo was evidently a punishment decreed by an All-seeing Eye, and the monk felt it was such, yet dared to brave the Almighty vengeance.

He had gained the south aisle of the chapel, and was almost ready to sink under the weight of the body, when a deep groan burst from one of the pillars as he passed. Nature was exhausted; he could proceed no farther; his lamp fell from his powerless grasp; Hugo tumbled from his shoulders on the flags, and his fall echoed through the distant galleries. The senses of the monk then fled, and he dropped motionless beside the cold corpse. On recovering, he beheld, with horror, a placard written in

red characters, fastened to the bloody bosom, commanding him to take the body, and cast it over the ramparts into the sea, or bury it in the courts; also, threatening to punish him with death, if he persisted in carrying it to the cemetery; but this threat was needless, as Montano turned from the remains almost frantic. To be obliged to touch it again would have been a most dreadful punishment; for his superstitious fears were awakened by the novelty of his situation, having imagined that the body grew tremendously heavy the last moments he had borne it. On reflection, he found the frightful placard had not forbade him to leave Hugo where he then was; he therefore determined to drag him into an adjoining pew, and leave the rest to fate.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



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